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THE EMPRESS.

A NOVEL,

BY

G. BENNETT,

AUTHOR OF "THE ALBANIANS."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

In presenting these Volumes to the Public, the Author thinks it necessary to observe, that, from unavoidable circumstances, the MS. has been in the Publisher's possession for more than twelve months, this statement he hopes will prevent his readers from imagining he has in any instance been guilty of a plagiarism from Mr. Bulwer's admirable novel of 'Pompeii,' that work having issued from the press in October, 1834. The Author alludes to this circumstance for the following reason—When two persons happen to write two novels, the scenes of which require to be filled up with persons of the same country, and consequently possessed of the same national opinions of laws, religion, sports, and amusements, their readers must, in many instances, discover a resemblance, but, although the diversions of the arena, &c. are described in The Empress, as well as in Pompeii, the circum-

stances and situations of the principal actors, will be found to differ so materially, that he trusts the readers, while perusing the following pages, will not consider their time unnecessarily occupied with a twice told tale. Although—

> ——" the good old times, when all was new,
> And every hour brought prodigies to view,"

no longer exist, there are still many who love to listen to the tales of old. The events of real life have become of more interest to the generality of English readers, than in the good old days of the last century, and the wild absurdities of fiction, are now superseded by works founded upon the striking events of history, or the interesting incidents of private life. It has been often mentioned as a literary criminality, that Sir Walter Scott made history subservient to his novels, instead of making his novels subservient to history; whether he deserves censure for this or not, let those who think it a point of disputation argue; but certain it is, that his novels have caused numbers to refer to the pages of the historian who, had they not read the novelist with delight, would never have burthened their heads with history or biography.

A novel writer does not pretend to confine himself to any beaten track; he makes pleasant excursions wherever his inclination leads him, and variegates the level path of history with the flowers of his imagination. No one would ever think of referring to Shakspeare as an historical authority, and yet he has written eighteen historical dramas! And these two comets of literature, whose journey to the sun was performed in different ages, and by different routs, have caused a greater knowledge of the chronicles to be diffused, than there would have been, had the dramatist and novelist never existed.

What man, in his hours of recreation, would pursue a dull monotonous track, in preference to one shadowed with trees, variegated with flowers, impregnated with odours, and refreshed with sparkling cascades? Or, what man is there, or woman either, (for the Author would not willingly exclude his fair readers from so interesting a question) who will not turn to the page of the historian, after so delightful a ramble, to ascertain how far the imagination of the poet (for a man may be a poet in prose as well as verse) has carried him from reality. Let us hope there are but few who do not blend the useful with the ornamental.

To the critics the Author bows with all the deference their power commands, but requests them to bear in mind, that "Basil softly touched yieldeth a sweet scent, but chafed in the hand a rank savour—even so his labours, slily glanced on, may breed content, but examined to the proof, small commendation." Be this as it may, the vessel is launched into the sea of popular opinion, and must either make a prosperous voyage, or sink to rise no more.

THE EMPRESS.

CHAPTER I.

"When I heard thy deep-detested name,
A shivering horror crept through all my frame,
A deep, cold chill, as if a snake or toad
Had started unawares across my road."

Gifford.

It was at the close of a delightful day in August, when, upon a distant hill, a woman with one attendant stood gazing upon the eternal city; the temples, palaces, and gorgeous baths, with their long range of colonnades, their fountains, terraces, and extensive gardens, afforded an inexhaustible field for contemplation,

and delight—but the woman, who stood facing the broad disk of the setting sun, looked like the spirit of night, arising to commence her gloomy reign. She was cloathed in a dark mantle which entirely concealed her person, and frequently she stooped to gather a particular herb, that grew among the ruins of an ancient sepulchre; while her follower, an urchin of dwarfish dimensions, peered carefully about, to prevent her being surprised in her secret occupation, or gathered together the plants she had culled for her particular purposes. His head was of a magnitude that ridiculed the rest of his ill-proportioned body, which was particularly small, with short legs, and long arms—and the little grey eyes that twinkled under his bushy brows, clearly demonstrated how entirely his heart was devoted to mischief.—His thick and projecting lips revealed, at intervals, a set of teeth beautifully white and even, the perfec-

tion of which served only to render the surrounding ugliness of his countenance, more glaringly conspicuous.

"Thou weed," exclaimed the woman, as she tore one from a moss-covered fragment of the ruins. "Thou weed, in whose slight stem, the bane of mortals is concealed and known to me alone; let others cull bright flowers, *I* gather *thee* thou wild and desolate thing, that bloomest only in the midst of time-worn stones, and walls that have outlived the cursed race who reared them. How many a widow thanks thee for thy power, who, but for thee, had dragged along for years a burthensome existence with the dull log her husband, who now sleeps in quiet beneath some marble tablet, upon which is carved a history of virtues he never knew? How many youthful heirs have cause to pay deep homage to thy name, whose feet uncon-

sciously so often bruise thy head? and noble brows, around which the laurel so proudly twines, should bend to thee thou conquerer of earth's rulers. Thy potent juice deprived you noble mansion of its worthless master.—The miser Passienus; doating fool! where are thy treasures now? the hoarded wealth of thy inglorious life? All, all, at the disposal of that being who wedded to destroy thee and possess them.—Two days have scarcely elapsed, since she became the wife of Claudius.—Oh, 'tis a happy union! a most fit one.—The haughty and ambitious—the daring and unforgiving—the subtle and remorseless Agrippina, for the third time hath put on Hymen's bands, to loosen them at her pleasure. She will not long endure their weak restriction. I know her well—the sensual idiot, she hath made her lord, must bow down to her footstool, or lie lower. The son of Ænobarbus engrosses all her thoughts

and in the distant gloom of time to come, I see him seated on the Imperial throne! To aid which event, I shall be eagerly sought after. Fortune and Crime will be my handmaidens, and Death my slave. Oh! what is kingly power compared with mine!—the lords of earth breathe at my mercy!—I enter the Patrician palaces, and walk the marble floor, like a supernatural being, through rows of mute attendants, who scarcely dare to breathe as I pass by them, to the close chambers of their guilty lords, or ladies—for both sexes need my skill to rid them of some obstacle to their pleasures; and Agrippina employs me as the swift minister of her revenge, or to aid her unquenchable ambition. She revels now with fortune's halo round her glorious brow; the envied Empress of commanding Rome, ha, ha, ha!" and the mysterious woman laughed with so wild and shrill a tone, that it was carried to a consider-

able distance, gathering in its way the hoarse mirth of her goblin page.

"I wonder," cried he "that the tuneful echoes sleep when such sweet voices woo them to be stirring! my double bass accords well with your harsh treble—look—we've disturbed a family of bats, from their quiet slumbers! how the creatures circle round us on the wing! What think you of the omen, mighty mistress?"

Without noticing his remark, she watched them till they disappeared among the ruins of the Mausoleum.

"I thank ye for your care," she exclaimed—"ye give me hope for my labour,"—then turning her eyes towards a Palace, conspicuous for its magnificence, she continued—"Ye marble walls, through which the stately matron takes her walk, beholding smiles in which the watchful adder basks unseen, why have ye not the power, to unfold the whispers that are breathed

upon your sides, and fill her mind with fears of coming danger—scatter the roses that adorn her cheeks, and set the hues of death untimely there, unfix the lofty bearing on her brow, and make the lightning of her eyes retreat into the gloomy tempest of her soul!—How mean are all these creatures—the beautiful, the wise, the great, when I appear! the proudest tremble as I pass their thresholds, and eye me, as the bird looks on the rattle snake, without the power to fly—dreading my sight, yet, by my influence, enticed to their destruction."

"Right mistress," said the dwarf, who approached her at the moment—"I thought I should have died with laughing, when the rich citizen's wife sent for you to her house, in order to obtain a drug for her more ancient helpmate. —Do you remember how she shifted from one couch to another, as you entered the apartment, each removal rendering the distance between

you greater than before, until at last, by accident, she espied me at her elbow, at the lower end of the room? I could not have appeared to much advantage that evening, for no sooner did she see *me*, than she rushed into *your* arms for protection. The prey was caught, the *composing* dose administered, and the fate she intended for her husband, recoiled upon herself. Plot and counter plot.—The effect was admirable!—upon the stage it would have been wonderful. Sophocles, Euripides, never composed a scene to be compared with it.—The well acted despair of her grim husband, when she was discovered to be no more, the cold dews standing upon his forehead, the hair he tore in locks from his mad head! ho, ho, ho! That man was a capital actor; and the lady now lies comfortably enough beneath that stately monument. Who would not be a murderess for scenes like these? I crave pardon, I meant a minister

of death,"—he paused, and the woman read the following inscription.

'Here lieth the Body
OF
ÆTHERIA,
The beloved Wife
OF
FABIUS SERRANUS.

Who lived a pattern of excelling virtue,
And died lamented by her friends, and kindred.'

"Accursed race of smiling hypocrites! how my heart loathes that dignity of form whose beauty makes ye look a kin to Gods, while, in your breasts, ye bear the savage hearts of wolves and tigers. I loathe myself but for resembling ye—a despised and guilty creature, laden with crimes, imposed on her by others, and at first committed to revenge her wrongs, can hate herself for being partly human." During this

soliloquy, the Dwarf danced round the monument, and by a variety of attitudes and anticks appeared to be keeping up an interesting conversation with its deceased inhabitant, at length he broke out into the following rude and unceremonious song :—

Lady, good lady, the sun has gone down,
Up, gentle lady, and settle your gown,
Your shroud is your gown, lady, lift up your head,
Ha, ha ! how I long for a dance with the dead !
Up, lady, up, I would look on your bones,
Dancing by moonlight among the grey stones,
Cast off your slumber then—rise from your bed,
Ha, ha ! how I long for a dance with the dead !
Here will I lead thee in garments so pale,
By fingers devoid of flesh, tendon or nail,
And bow to the charms of thy skeleton head,
Ho, ho ! how I long for a dance with the dead.

This was sung in a wild strain of appalling merriment, which startled even his mistress, and she checked him, as he was about to proceed, in a tone he was too well accustomed to obey, to venture any further with his ill-timed

jocularity. The darkness encreased and the wind swept with a mournful sound through the cypress trees, that grew near the sepulchre of Ætheria. Birds of evil omen were lamenting in their haunts—the long hoot of the owl, and the voice of the night raven met their ears, at intervals, and added solemnity to the scene.

"We waste time," said the woman, "it grows late, and the senseless dead take up the moments that ought to be employed in vengeance on the living. Follow me, Anaxicrates—thou art like nothing human but thyself, and I can endure thy presence."

"I thank the Gods for the care that was taken in the formation of my peculiar body; for had I been cast in the mould of a modern fop, with all the feminine development of beauty, so indispensable to those who rise at court, I should possibly have been as empty headed as the best of them, and equally insincere in my

professions. But nature, having taken care to deprive me of all outward ornament, in return, bestowed upon me one good quality—fidelity; which, to you, most honoured mistress, is more valuable than a handsome face or a tongue versed in flatteries—I have some other advantages, which, although they may not be commended by the world, are nevertheless useful in their way; namely, an unblushing countenance, some tricks of cunning, an utter hatred for the race of mankind, who boast of shapes more symmetrical than my own, and dauntless courage. These are no trifling recommendations to one of my station, and I readily bear the control of one person to *revenge* myself upon the human race."

"And I am not the hardest mistress in the world to deal with, you will allow."

"No, no, I admit it, for our mutual interest depends so much upon our acting for each

other, that there is little fear of our having any quarrel of a serious nature—the duty you impose upon me, jumps so exactly with my humour, and the protection you afford me is so necessary to save me from the brutality of mankind in general, that I should despise myself if I did not to serve you faithfully; but, go before me, mistress of mine, for we have reached the city, and a chance word might betray the motive of our evening ramble."

"Have you the basket carefully concealed?"

"Yes."

The woman then walked forward, rapidly passing through the Gabina gate, and, after traversing a few streets, entered the porch of a handsome dwelling, in a narrow street at the foot of the palatine hill, followed by her uncouth attendant.

CHAPTER II.

"———— But neither, when his eyes
First saw the light of life; nor in the growth
Of infancy; nor in the advancing years
Of youth; nor in the riper age, that clothes
With gradual down the manly cheek, did justice
E'er deign t' instruct or mark him for her own."
Æschylus' Seven Chiefs Against Thebes.

We will take leave of these mysterious beings, for a short time, and introduce our readers to an apartment in the Palace of Claudius Cæsar.

Upon a couch, at one end of the room, a man, whose features were marked with an expression at once timid and cruel, reclined stretch-

ed at full length, with his head resting upon some cushions. His bloated countenance bespoke a sensualist in the worst extreme, while agitation and passion were apparent throughout his frame. By his side was seated a lovely female in the bloom of life and beauty; the hand of time had not traced one envious wrinkle upon the smooth surface of her forehead, her eyebrows were thin and beautifully arched, and her eyes, dark, quick and penetrating, were only rivalled by the fair lids that shaded them; there was a proud curl in her upper lip, which, when occasion served, conveyed an expression of scorn more piercing to the heart of the offender than twenty daggers; her throat was exquisitely formed and her stately figure was moulded into perfect symmetry.

You feel too keenly this success of Gotarzes

my dear husband," she exclaimed, in a voice calculated to sooth his irritation; "let me, who but these three days have partaken of the cares that wring your breast, strive to appease your indignation and restore the smile of pleasure to your cheek; though Meherdates hath been conquered by this Parthian rebel, Rome's glory is not forfeited, but his; and soon shall a more skilful general retrieve what he has lost."

"Peace, peace my lovely consort," said the Emperor, as he started from the couch and walked to and fro in the apartment, "I am deaf to all counsel but that which shews me swift means of vengeance on that audacious slave! his heart's best blood must stain my eagle's beak, whose golden plumage he has soiled with dust! I'll have him hunted by a pack of famished wolves! I'll force him to

cry for mercy, and he shall hear the laugh of mockery burst from the lips of Rome in terrible reply! Yes, yes, he shall have mercy! such as the vulture gives the writhing snake! The flames of Tartarus shall harm him less than the slow fire of my unquenchable anger! Fool that I was to trust the Prince's safety to that plodding lawyer, whose head is crammed so full of musty lore that he has no knowledge of a general's duty, or he would not have surrendered his sacred charge into the keeping of that wily Arab, whom I pray the Gods to place within my grasp or smother in the sandy whirlwinds of his native desert."

"Check this wild transport, Claudius, for my sake; we will devise some means to bring your enemy a prisoner to Rome. He shall be yours and dragged hither in chains: unless the Gods remove him from the earth and spare your executioners the labour."

"Then, there is that wild impetuous Carrhenes! Is it not shameful that a man, whose life has been one scene of warfare—a man, in whose knowledge I placed my firm reliance, should act so madly on the field of battle! he shall be banished—it was his rashness that ruined all!"

"Should we not rather blame the treachery of Izates? whose desertion merits the severest punishment? Turn your resentment against Gotarzes and his tracherous ally, and make both monarchs feel your indignation. But spare Carrhenes—it was his zeal that led him into error, and we should pardon the rashness of the head, when confident of the attachment of the heart. Excuse my offering this advice, perhaps it is not needed, and if your wisdom deems it worthless, think that it is a woman's privilege to talk, and forgive me."

"The service he has seen ought to have made

him a better general, he was wrong, very wrong, and for that slave Izates."

"Why wreak your vengeance on him to the utmost, send forth fresh legions, and crush his power at once—'tis just—'tis necessary. Let other kings think of his fate and tremble! it will make them bear the yoke with patience. —Fear makes men dutiful!"

"Gotarzes!"

"Give him the clemency you show Izates!"

"Yes, by the avenger Mars, I will—you counsel wisely, I'll follow your advice."

"And Carrhenes shall be pardoned."

"Yes, yes, he is forgiven at thy request. How fortunate I am in having such a wife! —how favoured by the gods! my Julia, while I gaze upon thee my anger dies, I forget my injuries while I listen to thy voice, I never knew true happiness till now—wife—Empress —counsellor, in this fair form combined, pre-

sents the world's chief treasures to my arms."

"I wish my woman's wisdom could repay the confidence you place in me; that I might ease you in the affairs of state, which are too numerous for your comfort or your health."

"I own it wearies me; I shall entrust the helm of government, for a time, into the hands of some one on whom I can depend, and recruit myself at Ostia or Misenum, where I may live in undisturbed repose, forgetful of the cares of life and attended only by its pleasures."

"On whom then, do you purpose to confer that honour?"

"I know not, dearest Julia—I fear them all, and fancy if one of them were trusted he might be tempted to play a bold game for the Empire with me—there is not a man in whom I can place implicit confidence, all are ambitious."

"I could name one who loves you tenderly, and who would watch your interest as his own, become your faithful representative in Rome, and aided by your counsel, and that of those, whom I can recommend for his preceptors, leave you at liberty to seek those joys, without which life becomes a slavish load."

"Who is it that you mean?"

"One of the Cæsarian race—of true descent, in whose young veins the blood of great Augustus flows in all its purity."

"Who, who, Silanus?"

"Oh no, but one whose heart is strongly bound to you—Domitius Œnobarbus."

"Your son, fair wife?"

"Yes, yes! Domitius, as you know, possesses wisdom far beyond his years, and is a favourite with the Roman youth. His wit and noble qualities shine conspicuous amongst them, without creating envy. Fathers point to him,

and charge their sons to follow his example! Who is so fit to sway the minds of men, as he who rules their hearts? O! think how many cares his vigilance will free you from my husband! How have I seen you tortured at the summons of obtrusive Senators, who heedless of your happiness have burst upon you in your hours of ease, or with officious zeal intruded upon the banquet's rights, with some unwelcome news of state affairs, of foreign broils or discontent at home. Oh, would my husband but adopt Domitius, he then might free himself at once from such ungrateful interruptions, and equal, in happiness, the immortal gods."

"Hold, hold! my fairest counsellor, what would become of the poor boy Britannicus, were I to follow such advice as this? what would the people say to such a proceeding?"

"The people!" replied the new made Em-

press, with a smile of ineffable contempt, "I did not think to see one of the Claudii dread the *people's* frown."

"But there are traitors, who only wait an opportunity to rise—and would gladly seize on such a circumstance to turn men's minds against me. I fear rebellion! and the soldiery, who reverence the name of Cæsar, might mutiny were I to rob my son of his proud birthright. Reflect upon the danger! no, no—I dare not wrong Britannicus."

"Think not I wish it—I would not wrong Britannicus, but serve my husband! He is so young—so very young," said she, correcting the first expression, for she reflected upon the age of her own son, and saw the necessity of drawing a distinction between the two—"were he to guide the chariot of the state, I fear his inexperience might draw upon him the fate of Phæton. Domitius has already entered upon the busy scene

of life, and will shortly be capable of lightening the cares of government. Why hesitate to follow the example of Augustus? did he not adopt the issue of his wife? and is not that a precedent sufficient to overcome the strongest scruple? But I am too eager for your welfare, and you may possibly believe I look for my son's aggrandisement, whereas your interest is my present care."

"No, no, I am sure you argue for my good, but ——"

"Why, Domitius is already an orator, and gifted by nature to excel in that noble science, —his countenance, his voice, his energy, his conceptions all proclaim him for the profession. Endowed with such advantages, what might he not in time perform, to ingratiate himself with the multitude? You have already kindly promised that you will recall from banishment Annæus Seneca—with such a tutor what may

he not achieve? Oh, noble Claudius, forgive me, if in my zeal to serve you I appear too anxious. Could you but read my heart I should not have occasion to speak, raised as I am to this giddy height of greatness, by your favour; what love, what duty can repay the obligation?"

"Thou hast repaid me with thy bewitching smiles, thy tender words and sunny looks, my wife.—But to place a rival in the way of poor Britannicus—"

"I will answer, now, if the proud daughter of old Marcus Lollius had thus given her counsel for your welfare, *she* would not have been dismissed a neglected suitor."

"Lollia!" exclaimed he, with an expression of delight, "is beautiful indeed!"—The face of Agrippina became troubled.—"She is bright among the brightest!"—Her brow darkened like a thunder-cloud.—"I know no being I ad-

mire so much!"—Here the lightning flashed from her eye, and met the glance of Claudius, which made him hurry the conclusion of his panegyric.—"Except thyself, unto whose stately charms Pallas herself might yield the palm of beauty."

The countenance of Agrippina became calm and thoughtful, and Claudius, exhausted with conversation, threw himself back upon the couch. For an hour all was silent, during which time the Emperor slept, and Agrippina reflected. A feeling of jealousy seized upon her heart, not for love of Claudius, but from the fear of Lollia Paulina being admitted as a favorite at court, and thereby becoming an instrument to thwart her projects of ambition.

Equally ambitious with herself, Lollia had aspired to obtain the hand of Claudius, at the death of Messalina, his former wife, and by

that act rendered herself particularly obnoxious to her more successful rival, who was informed that the friends had been busily employed in spreading discontent among the people, filling their ears with remarks, upon the immorality of her marriage with her uncle.

Her spies were on the alert, and she only waited until her power was more firmly established, to crush at once the cause of her uneasiness—she possessed a mind ill calculated to bear the proximity of a rival, whose charms were likely to weaken her influence over the heart of Claudius, and from this moment she resolved to hasten the death of Paulina, whose immense wealth she coveted. Her passion for accumulating riches was not of that mean and detestable kind which stamps the miser's character; she valued the shining coinage, as it enabled her to reward her instruments. Vitellius, the Censor, who had

exerted himself to the uttermost, in directing the mind of Claudius to her, while he was yet uncertain where to choose his wife, partook largely of her bounty. And Memmius Pollio, the consul elect, had already tasted the sweets of obedience to her will, and pressed the Emperor to unite his daughter with Domitius Œnobarbus in marriage—the voice of her husband disturbed her reveries, who demanded to know if supper was ready? she answered in the negative, and returned to the subject, in which her heart was so much interested, and upon which her thoughts had been so constantly employed. "You will grant me then, great Claudius, the boon I have requested for your sake alone, and by adopting my poor Domitius, render your state more tranquil, and me most happy? for what delight have I but in your presence, and how can I hope to be blest with that, unless some

one relieves you from a portion, at least, of that daily labour of the mind, under which your health must sink at last, and I be kept for ever at a distance from you.—Say, then, that my son shall look upon my husband as his father, his heart will grow to you, and to Britannicus, whom he will then cherish as his brother."

The delighted Claudius, clasping her in his arms, promised to give her suit due consideration, but refused to grant it at that time.

"Ask me what else you will," said he, "and rely upon my willingness to satisfy your wishes."

She paused, evidently chagrined at not having carried her point; but, at length, observed, that she had nothing else to request; and devoted the whole of her invincible attractions to charm her already besotted lord. Having played upon him sufficiently for her purpose, she enquired, carelessly, how he could have

been prevailed upon to betroth his daughter, the lovely Octavia, to a young man of such doubtful character and morals as Lucius Silanus?

"What, Lucius!" exclaimed he, hastily, "Lucius a man of doubtful character! Why, what have you to say against him? 'Tis false, 'tis false, whatever it may be. He's a brave boy, a very brave boy! he saved me once from being killed by an adder, which had crept into my gardens; I trod upon it, as it lay coiled in the grass, and swooned at my danger. When I recovered, I found that Lucius had grasped it by the throat, and with his dagger severed the head from the body! a brave boy! an excellent boy!"

"Pray be not angry with me, my lord, it is my anxiety for the welfare of the being, to whom you gave life, which makes me thus officious."

"No, no, not too officious! I admire thy zeal, and love to hear thee speak with such affectionate regard of my Octavia. But why object to Lucius Silanus? I culled him from the flowers of the land.—The noblest blood of Rome flows in his veins.—Besides he saved my life."

"I know the grateful breast to which he made appeal, when for the service (which if he had not performed he would have shewed the traitor's heart unmasked) he soared so high, as to demand her person as the recompence. But we should be sparing, even in our gratitude, least we bestow a gift, in value so far exceeding the merited reward, that it be deemed reproachable extravagance.—I have heard strange things of this Silanus, and though I never form opinions rashly, upon common rumour, yet, in this instance, my information agrees so well with my own observations, that to conceal it from

you, would render me unworthy of the station to which your love and goodness have exalted me.—You have no doubt heard of the affection he bears his sister?"

"It is notorious! and I love him the more for his fraternal feelings, they do honour to him."

"Yes, if those feelings were purely fraternal, I should esteem him too—but I have heard—and yet it seems improbable—I can hardly bring my mind to think it true.—But then such proofs—"

"Proofs! proofs of what? speak, tell me instantly all you have heard, and all that you suspect. I know you are not likely to form false conclusions—your words may be considered as prophetic warnings, for they are the interpreters of a powerful intellect—what is it men report, and you believe?"

"They say that the attachment so conspicu-

ous between them, proceeds from stronger causes than the common ties of kindred, and that she is not his sister only, but his mistress! If this be true, how deep an injury has he inflicted upon you, and how severely has he wronged the innocent Octavia. She has been fondly listening to a man, who at the present moment lives with his sister in unlawful intercourse. It is plain he cannot love your daughter for her self, or he would scorn to treat her so ignobly—but he would gladly make her his *wife*, for the great wealth he hopes may fall to him by the illustrious union."

"You confound me!"

"Nay, ask Vitellius, her father-in-law, a man in whom you trust, and who deserves your utmost confidence. Even he cannot deny the truth of this report. His age, his faithful adherence to your interests, every thing demands

that he should be believed, and with tears streaming down his aged cheeks, he told me of the shameful intercourse."

"How! dare he wrong the love that I have borne him by villainy so gross? And does he think my fair Octavia's hand shall ever be bestowed upon a man, who before marriage slights her? His rich blood shall not shield him from my anger."

"That is a quality most to be feared in him, if all I hear be true; but pardon me, I would not accuse any man, on whom you have bestowed the slightest partiality, until my proofs were ready, and at present they are not rendered palpable enough to strike conviction on a mind like yours, impressed as it has been, with a belief of his rectitude, and honor. For the present, therefore, I will not say any more upon the subject, but bear in mind the hints I have given, which I shall be able, in time, to substantiate."

"Nay, nay," cried Claudius hastily and in a voice of alarm, "I must know all you are acquainted with—and now. What! is he a traitor, has he betrayed the trust I reposed in him? Has he been plotting against his master's life? For your words sound mysteriously. Oh, miserable man that I am! my palace is surrounded and filled with false villains, conspirators! call out the guard and seize upon all my household. They shall all die—all, all, I will not live in terror. These frequent alarms will be the death of me—quick—quick, I say." Here a fit of coughing seized upon the ignoble Emperor, and he fell back exhausted by its violence into the arms of Agrippina, who, alarmed in her turn at the effect her words had produced, calmed his apprehensions by assuring him that no danger was to be dreaded for the present; she acquitted Silanus of having any design upon his sacred person, and soothed

him by explaining that it was to the morality of his conduct she alluded. Having recovered partly from his alarm he desired her to proceed, which she did after some apparent reluctance. "I have heard that Lucius Silanus is accustomed to mingle with some of the wildest of our Roman youth, at night, who meet in secret for the purpose, as it is said, of playing for high stakes—dice is their common game."

"Ah, a fine game—a fine game!" exclaimed Claudius, rubbing his hands together in delight.

"Have you ever read the treatise I composed upon it? I have studied it more than any man in Rome. Oh, 'tis a princely game, I have calculated the chances and never lose; I won, last night, a round sum of Corvinus, who was completely ruined by the game. However I have appointed him pro-consul for Africa, and he will soon recover his losses," He would have pro-

ceeded on this favourite topic for hours, but Agrippina, who had a greater game to play, and who discovered her error, brought him back to the subject from which he started, "It has been whispered" continued she, "that they have other motives than those of play, and wherever mysterious conduct is detected, I think it policy to withdraw your countenance from the parties, until the mists are cleared away, and they appear in your eyes as fair, and honest as at first."

"You are right—I will dissolve the contract, I will not sacrifice my daughter to a suspected traitor—Thanks, thanks my lovely monitress, he shall be watched. Ah, where shall I find a fitting husband for my Octavia! one who will uphold with his life, her father's throne, and be the guardian of my son, when age and infirmities bow me to the earth."

"I know not how to answer such a question

self-interest seems so closely linked with what I might be suspected of, and yet I could name one, who would be all your fondest hope requires—and yet, I will not, Claudius."

"You shall—go on—tell me who it is you mean? I know you wish me well—I discard Silanus, in favour of the person you may propose—she shall be his."

"My lord, your goodness robs me of power to speak my gratitude—but Domitius shall reply for me."

"Eh, what! and does Domitius love my daughter?"

"Oh, she is the very light of his existence—he pines in secret to possess her love, but does not breathe his wishes even to me. But I can see it in his watchful eyes, that follow her from spot to spot; and, when she is absent, I read it in his frequent sighs and downcast looks!—he loves her tenderly," and here the lady wiped

away an orient pearl from her fair cheek, which Claudius would have given a kingdom to have kissed away; but, at this moment, a messenger from the Senate was announced, who was entrusted with an address to be delivered into the hands of the Emperor. This was no other than Memmius Pollio, the devoted friend of Agrippina, who, by his influence, had prevailed with the Conscript Fathers to request that the Emperor would permit his daughter to become the wife of the youthful Œnobarbus: whose years agreeing so well with hers, rendered the marriage suitable. Agrippina having already smoothed the path for such a petition, it was no sooner read than it received the Imperial sanction.

"But come," said he, "as the sound of instruments approached the room, "there is no time for business now—the banquet waits our presence. Memmius, you will dine with

me. Come, no more talking, the joys of eating should engross us wholly. Oh! what would life be without its luxuries.—See, the doors open, and the carver stands ready to cut up the delicious food. Come, Sir, begin; rip me up that boar, and let us see what his thick hide contains.—Memmius Pollio, take you a couch by me—slaves, bring me napkins—now I begin to live!—Close all the doors."

Passing over the ceremonies of the banquet, we will follow the Empress to her private chamber, which she sought at an early hour, having appointed her son to meet her there, who, in obedience to her commands, was waiting for her when she entered the apartment.

CHAPTER III.

" Her eyes dark charm twere vain to tell,
But gaze on that of the gazelle,
It will assist thy fancy well;
As large, as languishingly dark.
But soul beamed forth in every spark,
That darted from beneath the lid,
Bright as the jewel of Giamschid."

Byron.

" I HAVE passed the time delightfully with your beautiful friend, my dear mother," said the youth, as she entered, pointing, at the same time, to a lovely girl, seated at a table, on which was placed a small harp, the chords of which had scarcely ceased to vibrate, when he spoke. " She has been giving me a lesson, and under

the auspices of such a preceptress you may be sure I shall improve rapidly."

She approached the girl, who ran to meet her, and embraced her affectionately, while the eyes of Domitius sparkled with animation as he gazed upon her. Acerronia was an orphan, she had been deprived of her mother in her infancy, and of her father (a centurion in the army) before she had reached the age of twelve. Agrippina, who by chance heard of her melancholy situation, sent for her to her house, and, charmed with her beauty, innocence and accomplishments, offered to become her future protectress; the honour was accepted with gratitude, and she was treated with a tenderness and attention to which (left, as she had been, to the care of menials, when her father was absent in the wars) she had long been a stranger; and she returned the kindness of her benefactress, with the most devoted attachment. The

passionate glances of Domitius, were checked by a look from his mother, which banished the smile from his lips, and caused his eyes to seek the earth, she then with great kindness bade her favourite retire into an inner chamber, observing that she had business of importance with her son. Acerronia withdrew, and the Empress, sternly addressing Domitius, exclaimed, "No more of this fooling, Sir; I charge you not to nourish in your breast, even for a moment, a passion which can bring nought but evil to her and disgrace to yourself."

"But how can I help loving her, good mother? She is so kind, so good, so beautiful, that to be near her and not love her is impossible. I feel that I could sacrifice my life for her, and would give up all other enjoyments to talk with her."

"Hear me, my son, you must henceforward resign all thoughts of her, and bend your

mind to that which is necessary for your future welfare and aggrandizement. I will take care to prevent your ever seeing this girl again.—Think of her no more, consider her henceforward as dead, for so she is to you, and see that you follow my instructions, which are given solely for your interest.—To come to the point —you have seen Octavia?"

"I have."

"How do you like her?"

"I as yet know so little of her that I can scarcely give an opinion—if you mean her personal appearance, I answer indifferently. If you allude to her disposition, I have not had an opportunity of judging of it."

"Can you love her?"

"That is a question to which I cannot give an answer; as it must depend upon what I have yet to learn of her character."

"Listen! Octavia is fifteen years of age,

possessing a sweetness of disposition rarely to be met with, generous and unsuspecting in the extreme, her words are at all times the faithful interpreters of her thoughts; she has no guile; and if her intellects are not of the highest order, the goodness of her heart makes ample compensation for any deficiency in that respect; she is the very creature upon whom I should fix, had I to choose a wife for my son in a less exalted sphere; and when so many virtues unite in one so highly born, she becomes a gem worth the labour of half a man's existence to call his own at last."

"Does she resemble Acerronia?"

"How now! the words have scarcely fallen from my lips that bade thee never think of her again; why am I not obeyed?"

"You told me, madam, never to think of her, but as of one long dead; but may we not look back upon the grave, in which the once loved

object is enclosed, and though conscious that it never can be ours again, dwell with a mournful pleasure upon the recollection of past happiness?"

"No, it is an useless expenditure of reflection, you will learn in time the folly of such recollections—to ensure present and future felicity should be our aim, which is chiefly obtained by forgetting the past; pleasure and pain, remembered, are alike detrimental to enjoyment—for however delightful the present hour may be, our natures will not grant it the perfections of those that are gone—and the recollection of former pain, cannot lighten existing calamities—both tend to cloud the scene.—Leave the past, then, to oblivion, and look forward to future greatness— Octavia must become your wife, the alliance will lead you so near the throne, that one short step will plant you there.'

"The throne!"

"What! have I roused the slumbering spirit of great ambition in your heart, my son? The throne, I say—when Claudius is no more, who shall prevent your ruling in his stead?

"Who? why Britannicus—the rightful heir."

Agrippina gazed upon her son for a moment and repeating the name of Britannicus, in a tone of supreme scorn, quitted the apartment, leaving Domitius to reflect upon her words.

For the first time in his life he began to think seriously—his brow, which until this moment was smooth and unruffled, now became wrinkled with reflection. He stood motionless upon the spot where his mother had left him, for some minutes, with his eyes fixed upon the door through which she departed, and seating himself at a table, with his cheek resting upon one hand, he bent his eyes on vacancy and held communion with futurity, as one by one its

shadows passed before him, until he reached the apex to which his hopes conducted him. He then started from his position, and walked to and fro in the apartment, with a far heavier tread than that with which he entered; there was a haughtiness in every stride, that plainly indicated the important workings of his mind. His mouth, no longer open with the smile of boyhood, was closed, as if to stifle the words that struggled for liberty within; while his lofty eye glanced over the sumptuous ornaments of the chamber, with an expression that seemed to say, "These were all made for me!" At length he stopped before a silver mirror, like one who for some time has been in uncertainty, fluctuating between hope and fear, and on a sudden comes to a decision. Then it was the thoughts, too powerful longer to bear imprisonment, found utterance, and bounded from his lips like a fierce charge of cavalry.

"I will be what my mother wishes me to be. Who would not be the ruler of the world, if fortune pointed out to him the way to win it, as she *has* done to me—who would not be the *envy* of the world, and sit aloft like the bright sun in heaven, whose light puts out the universal stars? My feet are ready feathered for the race, and I must win the goal.—I will—Britannicus I'll leave thee far behind, though now thou art beforehand in the course, and snatch the prize on which our hopes are fixed:—Claudius loves him, that is certain—well, what of that! may he not love me too? Britannicus takes but little pains to retain the affection of his father, and I must use my skill to seem more fond of the vile lump than he—no difficult matter that—and in person, I may compare with the bravest of them all. Delightful thoughts! come with me to my couch, and be

the kind companions of my sleep. But no, no, no! this is no night for sleep; my mother's restless spirit has taken possession of me, and, henceforth, I must bid adieu to rest.—Yet how shall I be able to dissemble?—oh, as others do. Yet hold—I must not be too profuse in my professions of attachment, for if I overshoot the mark my sapient stepfather may spy the cheat. I must become a subtle courtier, and steal his heart from him by imperceptible atoms. Yes, yes, I must not attempt it by surprise. I find I am becoming a very clever fellow on the sudden—good Janus! prosper my attempts, and in thy temple I'll make a monthly sacrifice of four white steers!" and with this promise, to the two-faced god, he retired to his couch, but not to sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

" Am I not branded with scorn?
Am I not marked out for dishonour?
Was I not free—and am I not a slave?"

Monk Lewis.

"I AM at a loss," cried Anaxicrates, "to account for that depression of spirits you have exhibited over a flask of the richest wine Campania can produce. Why you are no longer the gay, conceited coxcomb you so lately appeared, but are at once degenerated into a stupid, meditative, matter-of-fact, unsociable compa-

nion, without one bright idea to lighten the intolerable monotony. Here have I been wasting my precious beverage and more precious time upon a clod of earth, insensible alike to the charms of good fellowship and agreeable conversation. Surely nothing in this life could cause such an unusual depression of spirits; you must have been wandering in Hades or some other incomprehensible place: but I defy all shadows. Borrow a little of my philosophy, which exists in a thorough disbelief of every thing unconnected with this world. I defy all Gods, from Jupiter to Vulcan, and all dead heroes from Achilles to Julius. Live while you can. No matter how, so you enjoy yourself; this is my principle. The present moment is the only one worthy of consideration."

"It is the present moment which occupies my thoughts," answered his companion, "I am dissatisfied with myself, for wasting hours that

ought to be so much better employed for my ultimate happiness; which is only to be ensured by obtaining an object, of whom you have no better idea than of the illustrious men you have just mentioned." This rebuke proceeded from a diminutive figure on the opposite side of the table, who was no less a personage than the new Empress' dwarf page and confidant; but although he could not boast of any pre-eminence over his companion in point of stature, in the proportions of his figure he was infinitely superior. His hair, which was of the richest gold colour, hung in a profusion of shining ringlets over a brow as fair as the most delicate females; his eyes were of an indistinct colour, approaching to pink, and gave a peculiar expression to his countenance, but not an unpleasant one; his features were pleasing; his complexion healthy; his costume was fancifully composed of a shirt of silver cloth, descending

to his knees, and bound in at the waist by a jewelled belt, which fastened in the front with a diamond clasp; over this was thrown, negligently, a Persian shawl of considerable value, with a blue ground, and a deep border of curious workmanship; a small poinard with a jewelled hilt hung at his girdle, and a kind of turban was placed upon the table at which he sat.

"Ha! ha! ha! and so," replied Anaxicrates, with one of his hoarse and discordant laughs, "and so you fancy I am unacquainted with the history of both Greek and Roman. I'll convince you to the contrary. Achilles was a hero for no other reason than this—being invulnerable in all parts of his body except the heel, it was as much as his life was worth to turn his back upon the enemy, and the other was too successful a cut-throat for us to forget him or Pharsalia. The Cæsars have been a fine race. Tiberius was my patron. I was sent to him

from Thessaly, as a nondescript, when I was only eight years of age. The deformity of my body suited the construction of his mind, and we led a pleasant life enough for some years. He had only one fancy that I found irksome, which consisted in half flaying my body with scourges whenever he was particularly jocose; but I became familiarized to it at last, and as I determined to do him a good turn at some favourable opportunity, I bore it patiently and without a murmur. I lived with him in Caprea, the scene of his pleasures and his vices, and assisted my friend Macro in closing the lips and nostrils of my master when he had fallen into a swoon, to prevent the possibility of a recovery—a very easy method of relieving a man of a burthensome existence; daggers make unclean work! The services I rendered Tiberius made me a favourite with Caligula. At first the scene was changed, and the deluded people fancied them-

selves fortunate in obtaining such an Emperor; but I, who knew the mind of the young prince, and that the golden fruit was rotten at the core, laughed at their hopes in secret, and looked forward to the time when, throwing off the mask, he would stand forth arrayed in all the plenitude of guilt,—the terror and abhorrence of his people. A short time only elapsed when my anticipations were realized. Rome became the city of lamentation. Senators died daily, and no one dared question the justice of their fate. Widows and orphans deprived of their property wandered into voluntary exile, and died for want. I remember sitting on a stool at the Emperor's feet, when he took his seat to behold his human victims given to wild beasts, and remember the grim smile of satisfaction that played round his iron features during the festival! Ah! he was a wonderful man. Such a dignified contempt for the sufferings of others

never before witnessed, and I could not help longing to see how he would conduct himself in a similar situation. I managed to get rid of him in about three years; mine was the head that directed the plot; but the world has no idea how much it is indebted to me. Ha, ha, ha! and now I will tell you the name of the person you were thinking of when I taxed you with such a depression of spirits, and such unsociable conduct—Acerronia! Ha, ha, ha! I am at length, I confess, astonished to find a creature of my species, created only for the scoff and laughter of mankind, (for so they think and treat us) give way to hopes so vain. You fall in love, forsooth! ha, ha! why as soon would huge Olympus stoop its head to kiss an ant-hill, as that fair one bend to taste thy lips; for shame! for shame! let a more noble passion fire your breast—revenge—revenge for all the countless degradations heaped hourly

upon us by these beings, who laugh at our insignificant stature, and mark us out for their audacious ridicule and contempt."

"Why, truly," said the other, somewhat nettled at the presumption of Anaxicrates, for drawing a comparison between them, "I can scarcely wonder at your being looked upon with scornful eyes. That form of yours would turn an Œthiop pale, with fright, if he had never seen it before; but you might have a little more discernment than to place my person in the ranks of ugliness and deformity. Besides, you are old, as well as disagreeable in person, when compared with me. In fact, I am looked upon as the court beauty, you as its fright! pray forbear making comparisons so unpardonable and absurd."

Anaxicrates, after a loud roar of laughter, which greatly ruffled the temper of his guest, exclaimed, "Well said, unconquerable vanity!

who will now dare to dispute thy sway, when even the soul of an enslaved dwarf is impregnated with thy powerful charm, and boasts of the beauty of his pigmy person! We shall see monkeys strutting along the streets, and boasting of the beauty of their long-tailed bretheren; nay, have them come as pages to the great, and ask the hand of any favorite beauty they feel desirous of possessing—offering an asylum in the pathless forest or some mountain's side, where, for their human mates, they'll crack their nuts, and store the kernels in their pouches till the fair grow hungry! ha! ha!—How poor Acerronia would shudder if such an epitome of a man as you are should breathe the soft language of love into her ear. Fancy the picture!—oh! for the pencil of Apelles to describe the scene!—the beautiful Acerronia reclining upon her couch, tuning her lyre, or embroidering with her white hands some sump-

tuous garment, and the besotted lover vainly striving, upon his knees, to touch her rosy fingers, while she, with smothered laughter, turns aside to hide the mirth she cannot quite conceal—pitying, at the same time, the lunatic who, at her feet, is rendering himself more ludicrous than ever—while, on a sudden, in walks the stately figure of her protectress, the dreaded Agrippina, who, disgusted at the unnatural sight, orders her myrmidoms first to drag thee through some filthy pool, and then to hang thee by the neck to dry, as a warning to all presumptuous fools, hereafter, against imitating so preposterous an example."

"The flames of Ætna on thy tongue," cried the infuriated pigmy, at the same instant drawing a dagger from his side, and putting himself in an attitude to strike; but Anaxicrates, placing his hand upon the youth's arm, calmly said "Put up thy weapon, for I am not

in a mood to quarrel now, which, perhaps, is fortunate for your sake; my wrath is seldom raised. I even kill in sport; but then I seek some noble prey. I feel no pleasure in sweeping such wretches as myself out of this cursed world, although I love to see their misery; because they have not souls like mine to war against their vile oppressors. Therefore, I mock at you and your absurdity, in loving where you ought to hate, and where disgrace alone would follow the disclosure of your passion. Come! fill a goblet of this precious juice—the only mistress that should inspire beings like ourselves with love."

"Yet cannot I see the justice of your position," replied Camillus, (for such was the dwarf's name) somewhat softened by the flavour of his draught. "I have been kindly treated; her bright eyes are full of pleasure, when she addresses me; I enjoy all that wealth

or kindness has to bestow, and, above all, her presence! In the name of Fortune, then, why should I murmur at my fate?"

As his friend had no immediate reply to make, he sang, to evade the question,

> "Drink, baby drink; and thy noddle of lead
> Shall be quickly exchanged for a sensible head,
> Which at present defies e'en a senator's skull
> To teem with less wisdom, or nonsense more dull."

The eyes of Anaxicrates glittered as his sarcasm fastened upon the heart of his companion, "and can you not find a nobler occupation," said he, "than gazing upon eyes that take no pleasure in beholding you? Do not your despised brethren deserve a moment's thought? How many are there of us in the city kept for the sport of pride, malignity, and foolery?—Sent forth by Nature, fashioned for the scorn and merriment of her more enviable productions, one passion only rules in my breast—revenge!

implacable and terrible revenge against the high-born and the beautiful. Let the tyrants be our slaves, when they least dream of being so, and let our secret actions have more power upon their hated race, than their open ones on ours."

"I am not at all surprised," answered Camillus, "to hear you rail against a race of beings who, naturally averse to any thing like deformity and ugliness, heap contumely upon you, avoid your sight, or if you persist in presenting yourself before them unbidden, scourge you for the presumption, and chase you from them as an animal dangerous and unsightly: but, as I have before said, I am astonished, positively astonished, at your impertinence in ranking me with your distorted and malignant fraternity. I now perceive the folly I have been guilty of in honouring you with my friendship, and from this

moment I forbid you ever to speak of me even as an acquaintance, upon pain of my displeasure, which believe me, is so pointed, that were you to live a hundred years, its sting would never be forgotten. You have confessed yourself an open enemy to Rome. I shall not betray you, for I think you cannot do much mischief; but beware"—

"Silence, thou heap of perfume!" cried Anaxicrates, irritated in his turn, "or in my anger I may pound thee into atoms, and transport thee in a scent-box to thy mistress.—Begone! thou thing of froth and frippery from this house, which now protects thee from my anger. I did intend to make thee instrumental to a great design, but thou art so eaten up with self-conceit that any bold or noble enterprise is quite unsuited to thy shallow mind: the epithets you have bestowed upon me are yet to be accounted for, and rest assured that the time is

not far distant when you shall rue the hour you made an enemy of Anaxicrates. Begone! thou spawn of nothing! enamoured fool! worshipper of a shadow!"

"You are unarmed, and I scorn to use the advantage I possess; but the time will come when we shall meet on equal terms!" placing the embroidered cap upon his head, and drawing the shawl closely round his figure, Camillus turned upon his heel and quitted the house, followed by the hoarse laugh of the malignant Anaxicrates, who, more irritated than usual, darted into another apartment, where by the light of a solitary lamp his mistress awaited his return.

CHAPTER V.

" The eyes were starting from their socks,
The mouth it ghastly grinned,
And there was a gash across the brow,
The scalp was nearly skinned."
Kirk White.

" How now, Anaxicrates," said the woman, " what news from your dwarf friend? have you gained him over to our interests? is he willing to serve us in our designs? methinks he should have drank enough by this time to put him in good humour with our project. You look ruffled. Is the fool incorruptible? You did not betray

our secret, I trust, until you could calculate upon his willingness to assist us?"

"No, no, mistress, I am not so dull an instrument; but I have been foiled. I had hopes of bringing him to our side, and should have succeeded, but the idiot has fallen in love—a pestilence fall on him."

"Why should that hinder him from serving us?"

"Because the thing he loves is no less a personage than her favourite, her bosom friend, and he will now protect the one for the sake of the other. I have wasted valuable time and excellent wine upon a lump of love-stricken vanity, who is so taken with his own beautiful person, that he believes every one ought to be as much enamoured of it as he is himself. But if I do not spoil his proportions, I am an Œthiop."

"Peace, peace! I have other work to do

than listen to thy invectives. Have you taken care to promulgate the calumnies I entrusted you with against Narcissus, in such a manner that they may reach the ears of Agrippina?"

"I have; and she has already heard them, if I mistake not."

"The gods grant they may prove his ruin! I would not take his life by sudden means. I would have him die a lingering death, deprived of fire, of water, and of food; see anguish in his eyes—famine in his cheek—and whisper in his ear, despair! The time may come, and Agrippina must be my instrument. I have long been hers, and will be longer to gain my object. Oh! I have laboured hard for my revenge; and come it will. Lollia Paulina! thy vengeance must give way to mine. She will be here at midnight, and it is near the hour. I must amuse her with some juggling arts, and promises that never can be fulfilled. She must have hope;

conduct her by this staircase to the vault beneath, and be near me to assist my plans, but not in sight of her; her signal will be three taps upon the door; be ready to receive and conduct her to me with secrecy. Thus saying, she touched a spring, which instantly caused the pannel to shift, and revealed an opening to a flight of steps; she passed through the aperture, and a second motion replaced the pannel in its former situation. By the aid of a lamp she descended the steps, mouldered by time—the walls and roof glittered with damps that hung upon their surface. Suddenly she paused, her progress being interrupted by an iron door; and drawing from her girdle a massive key, she introduced it into the rusty wards, and the door opened: a sound like that of thunder, when it bursts above the traveller whose road lies at the bottom of some deep ravine, and roars among the mountains round his head—

greeted her entrance as the door swung upon its hinges, and dashed itself against the rocky substance of the subterranean walls; peal followed peal in successive echoes, as with a fearless foot she stepped into the cavern, amongst the mouldering remains of what was once endowed with feeling, mind, and soul—the abode of corruption. Dry withered bones were strewed about the ground; idols of various kinds were ranged in solemn groups, dividing the cavern into several compartments, and caused a superstitious terror to seize upon those who ventured too near its awful precincts. In the centre of the place was a circle, formed of strange characters, in the middle of which lay a human head, the flesh of which, acted upon by the surrounding damps, had changed into disgusting life, and in the shape of worms preyed upon itself; a ray of moonlight, piercing through a fissure in the roof,

threw a solemn light upon the figure of Locusta as she stood gazing upon the unsightly spectacle. She cast her eyes around and addressed the marble figures, which stretched along the cavern, as though they were endowed with hearing and perception:—

"Ye silent witnesses of my revenge, midnight again has brought me to your shades—hail!" The last word was uttered in a voice so loud and shrill, that, as if the spirits of the departed, whose stone sarcophaguses were strewed about, inhabited the place, a hundred echoes repeated the word.

"I thank ye for your welcome!" continued she, as the last response died away in a distant passage. "Again I break upon your quietude, and require your aid. Oh superstition! how I thank thy influence. Grim sights, and mystic words! how much I stand indebted to your

power; but, most of all, dear ignorance! to thee, the supreme cause of both: thou spreadest thy veil of clouds before men's eyes, and they walk forth in darkness, to become the prey of the first robber whom they meet; he steals their brains, and they can then behold nothing but what thy shadowy realm presents, where all is indistinct." A gust of wind, which ruffled the garments of Locusta, and the loud sound that shook the vault as the door closed, announced the arrival of the lovely Lollia Paulina, whose charms were a formidable barrier to surmount, when Agrippina took the heart of Claudius as by storm; for she too sought the Emperor's hand in marriage, and, disappointed in her wishes, her hatred for her rival knew no bounds, to revenge herself upon whom she had chiefly demanded this midnight interview. A feeling of terror crept over her as she descended the long flight of steps, guided

by Anaxicrates; but when the massive door closed upon her entrance, and she viewed the dismal spot to which she had been conducted, a low cry of alarm burst from her lips which swelled into a shriek, when apparently a number of voices in quick succession saluted her by name, and bade her welcome to that gloomy region. She would have turned to fly, but the grasp of the dwarf was upon her. Locusta was standing in that part of the cavern where the moonlight fell strongest, and her tall meagre figure, drawn to its full height, had something unearthly in its appearance, that tended in no small degree to increase the terrors of her high-born visitor. "Approach, lady, and fear nothing," said she, "although this dwelling is not so fair as that you have just left, and the odour it exhales is less fragrant than the perfumes to which you are accustomed; it is the spot where you are destined to obtain the know-

ledge you seek. We have nothing to fear from treachery in these vaults. The dead alone are witnesses to our conversation, and they commune not with the living, unless it be with beings like myself, who by their potent spells can bring the departed spirit back to its mortal dwelling." As she spoke the last ray of the descending moon disappeared, and they were left in darkness; but, in a few minutes, the mystic characters that formed a circle round the head became so bright, that they illuminated the cavern for several yards round.—"Now tell me, daughter of an illustrious line, your motives for this visit; according with your wish I have, as you perceive, used all privacy; there are few persons who would venture here for curiosity; this abode is fitted only for such as are not to be awed by beings of another world."

"Alas! where am I? What horrid place

have I been conducted to, and where is the dwarf who acted as my guide to this abode of horror? Locusta! you are a fearful being; but in mercy do not offer me any wrong. I am alone, helpless, defenceless, a woman like yourself, and yet I tremble in your presence."

"A woman like myself! ha, ha!—no, no! How would your haughty brow redden with anger to hear another make a comparison so odious. But do not tremble, lady; let the guilty tremble. You are all purity, and I the scorn of all the great and good in Rome; how should I venture even in thought to harm you? You have, no doubt, some charitable deed in contemplation, that needs my secrecy and skill to execute. Some fair friend, for instance, whose life has become burthensome to her, or *you*, and who will rest more composedly in the tomb than on a bed of down, has awakened your compassion, and you seek my aid to secure the

means of ensuring her eternal tranquillity. Is it not so, most virtuous of Roman widows?" The burning letters grew redder as she spoke, and threw a ghastly glare upon the features of the sorceress, exposing the bitter mockery of her smile, which made the blood run cold in the veins of her nocturnal visitor.

"In the name of all the Gods," exclaimed she, but a loud peal of laughter rang through the darkness as she uttered the last word, interrupting her speech, and striking terror to her heart; she sank upon the fragment of a column, breathless with alarm. "What is your will?" demanded the immovable Locusta. "I have already told you to be bold of heart. You may behold strange sights before we part, and listen to worse sounds; but let them not appal you. Tremble not, before your slave; resume your confidence; and tell me your desires. What would you, with the dweller among the dead?

the sorceress Locusta—the hater of existence, and the patroness of tombs!"

After a few moments employed in rallying her frightened spirits, Lollia replied, "I little expected, when I desired to meet thee privately, that such a place as this would be prepared for my reception; but I am here, and unless my brain turns with fear, I will explain my business. Agrippina"—

"I'll spare you a recital of the past. The instruments you employed have failed in their attempts to bias the heart of Claudius. The God refused his aid to your conspiracy, and the Chaldean seers have deceived you in their promises. Your rival has been successful, and now you come to me, the last resource that presents itself, to aid your ambitious hopes.—Am I not right?"

"By what mysterious agency you learnt

these circumstances, I am utterly at a loss to conjecture."

"Hem! There is a spirit in this spacious hall, whose information is sometimes valuable. You require the removal of the Empress, and it is a wish worthy the widow of Caius. Look upon this foul and featureless mass," said she, pointing to the head in the centre of the circle, which by degrees assumed its living shape, but not until the conclusion of her address to Lollia. "Who would believe that round this worm-worn brow the badge of royalty once proudly twined? or who would think that in those hollow cavities, in the far depths of which a glimmering light once more appears, the eye of majesty flashed forth its angry lightning? or ever dream the skull you first beheld could thus resume its former functions, and strike conviction to your soul, that it was once your husband's?"

A shriek of horror burst from the lips of Lollia as she uttered the name of Caligula! and sank lifeless upon the ground. At the same instant a shout was heard that startled Locusta. The magical delusion vanished; the sound of hurrying footsteps resounded through the darkness; torches glared in various parts of the cavern; the secret entrance had been discovered, and she found herself surrounded by armed soldiers, who, with brutal taunts, hurried her away.

CHAPTER VI.

"A woman of gallantry is ambitious of being beloved; it is enough for a coquette that she is thought lovely, and passes for handsome. The business of one is to make an engagement; of the other to make a *conquest*. The first passes successively from one engagement to another; the second has a great many amusements on her hands at once. Passion and pleasure are predominant in the one; vanity and levity in the other. Gallantry is a weakness in the heart, or perhaps a vice in the complexion; coquetry is an irregularity of the mind. The gallant lady makes herself feared; the coquette, hated. From the two characters might be formed a *third—the worst of all characters.*"——*Bruyere.*

THE swoon into which Lollia had been thrown by the illusions of Locusta, enabled them to bear her, without her knowledge, safely and speedily to her palace, where she

was delivered into the hands of her own attendants, and the soldiers departed without making any observations to them. All was executed in the profoundest silence. When she recovered from her state of insensibility, the horrors of the cavern were fresh upon her memory; the mysterious manner in which she had been brought home perplexed her, and the attendants could not relieve her curiosity by their answers. Her anxiety and terror brought on a fever, which for some days confined her to her bed; and her maidens, alarmed at the words she uttered during her delirium, scarcely ventured to breathe their apprehensions to each other. By the time she recovered strength, and the aberrations of intellect became less frequent, there were but few traces left of the once lovely countenance of Paulina. Woman, once faded, has no second spring. The sunken and hollow cheek formed a sad contrast to the beauty which

once rendered her the idol of mankind; the touch of art, which had for some years past supplied the natural hues of youth and smoothed the wrinkles of the wealthy matron, having been necessarily neglected, exposed the natural ravages of time; and even her immediate attendants and flatterers blushed as they made a compliment upon her beauty, although they had not sufficient honesty to withhold it, nor their mistress mind enough to reject it. But the hated truth presented itself too soon to her senses. Desiring an attendant to bring her a silver mirror which adorned her toilet, in order, as she said, to see what ravages sickness had the power of making, and to what excess her friends could administer the delicious draught of flattery—then it was that female vanity received its deadliest wound. The faithful mirror was dashed upon the ground, and with a cry of agony she hid her face beneath her pillow,

waiving her hand for her ladies to quit the apartment; one only remained; the rest obeyed the signal. For some hours the tears of mingled feelings rolled from her eyes, accompanied with heavy sobs, which brought on a succession of violent spasms, succeeded by fainting fits. Her solitary attendant, alarmed at her sufferings, implored her to permit the physician to wait upon her; but the thought of exposing herself, even to him, operated like lightning upon her almost broken spirit. "Never!" she exclaimed, raising herself upon one snowy arm, "all now is over! I shall become the pitied—the neglected of all mankind, who until this fatal hour possessed the charm to rule the boldest, and make him happy even with a smile. The mask is torn away, and the true visage has been exposed before those of my own sex, who until now envied my beauty; but let them dare to breathe a syllable of what has passed, and my

vengeance shall surely pursue them to the grave !"—

Exhausted by this ebullition of feeling, she again fell back upon her pillow, and vented her expiring passion in broken sobs and sighs. But an additional pang was yet to come. A packet from the Senate arrived, by which she was informed of a prosecution about to be commenced against her, for having endeavoured, by unlawful and sinful measures, to obtain the affections of the reigning Emperor ! An earthquake could not have created more terror in her breast than this dispatch ; and, like it, her bosom heaved with internal fires as if it would burst at once, and end the dreadful conflict.— Some master spirit had watched her actions, and by a vigilant agency obtained a knowledge of what she imagined was unknown to all.— She saw ruin hanging over her, like some huge rock that's loosened from its mountain bed, to

crush her with its weight. Yet still a shew of innocence was necessary, and she determined by her munificence to secure to her interests all those whom she suspected of being unfavourable to her cause. While the party already devoted to her was of so formidable a nature, composed as it was of men of the first rank and talent in the empire, that whoever might appear as her accuser would be considered a bold one, and have to combat against a host of patrons, formidable in their numbers, firm in their allegiance, and who would be aided in their defence from the coffers of one of the wealthiest persons in Rome. Having dispatched a message to the Senate, indicating her intention to appear by counsel, she became more calm; and exhausted by the various emotions that so fiercely agitated her, in unsparing succession, she closed her eyes, (although upon their lashes the big tears still hung like dew upon the petals of a flower)

and enjoyed the luxury of a refreshing sleep.—On the following morning she found herself sufficiently recovered to rise. By the aid of art she endeavoured to restore the beauty time and her late illness had so cruelly deprived her of. She succeeded beyond her expectations; and dispatched messengers in every direction to summon her friends and kindred, to consult with them upon the danger in which she was then placed. The first and most devoted was Callistus, over whom she possessed unlimited power. He lived but in her presence, and, during her late illness, had been an hourly enquirer at her gate. His fortune had gone in contributing to the pleasures of his mistress, who was sufficiently artful to keep him in her chains without yielding to his solicitations, knowing that possession too often brings on satiety. He was of noble birth, and generally esteemed in the army for his skill and undoubted

courage. But this unhappy attachment drew him from his duty, to waste in folly and extravagance the time he might have employed much more advantageously and honourably, than in the pursuit of a woman whose heart was insensible to every thing but towering ambition, and insatiable vanity. He was a favourite with the Emperor, an enemy to Agrippina, and a slave to Lollia. These qualifications rendered him useful in her eyes—and ignorant of the real amount of his property, lavish in expenditure, from the over-grown bulk of her own—the thought of what Callistus lost at play never entered her head; nor did he think it prudent either to desist from an amusement which brought him so frequently in contact with the woman of his heart, or to reveal the ruined state of his finances. He had, at this time, borrowed money to supply his losses, to a considerable amount, yet could he not quit the

city where his mistress dwelt,—she was his fate; and he was the first to attend her summons.

"Callistus," said she, as he entered the magnificent saloon where she received her visitors, "you have ever proved yourself a firm friend to me in my prosperity, and I now require another proof of your attachment in the moment of adversity."

Callistus started at her altered appearance, and although he did not interrupt her discourse, his eyes fully expressed the anxiety of his breast.

"I have received," she continued, "a severe shock, from a message sent to me by the Senate, citing me to appear at the tribunal of justice, to answer a charge which may affect not only my property but perchance my life. I am well aware from what quarter the charge proceeds; but a veil of mystery, inimical to the attain-

ment of justice, is thrown over my accuser. Cast your eyes over this parchment and judge whether I have not need of all the friends my wealth or personal influence can obtain, to support me in the trial."

Callistus took the manuscript, and, after perusing it, assured her of his devotion to her cause. "Fear not," said he, "we must succeed, or Rome shall bleed for it. Think not the brightest eyes the world ever beheld shall be dimmed with sorrow, while love or gallantry exists. There is not a youth throughout the city but shall rise and buckle on his armour, if need be, to defend you."

"Alas! Callistus, I am not so popular among them as I used to be; for my freedom of manners has, I fear, too often excited hopes which it was never my intention to realize. I have met with sad upbraidings, Callistus, and frequently *you* have been the innocent cause

too; and some there are who have mistaken my natural gaiety for a proof of love.—During my sickness, I have thought of this, and censured myself for causing pain to many, although unintentionally. I have reproached my beauty in the mirror, and almost wished I had not been so fair."

"Oh! what an impious wish was that Paulina. It were less criminal to pray the gods to snatch the sun from heaven, and leave the world in darkness! Thy matchless beauty, like that radiant orb, gives life and joy to all who move within its sphere!"

"Would you, too, fall into the snare, after the confession I have made! let me not have to count among my foes, one, whom of all I have beheld, I wish to number as a faithful friend."

"I am a willing victim to your charms!—I know my own unworthiness too well, to hope

for a completion of my wishes—my heart and soul are yours to command; and though I fail to win your love, to look upon you and receive your confidence is worth the devotion of my whole existence."

"And such a one could poor Paulina love!—I mean if she could ever trust mankind again; but your whole sex is faithless, your appetites soon cloy, and then you part with us as though we were so many useless slaves, encumbrances on your time and fortunes.—No, no, I never more will be a loving dupe."

"You would not revenge the wrongs you suffered, from a faithless husband, upon a heart that loves you?"

"No—and for that reason I candidly confess, I do not think that I could love again, even though the suitor were—Callistus. Therefore, look upon me only as a friend, who feels too

grateful for your kindness to bid you leave her, and, may be, too careful of her own happiness."

"Fascinating being!" exclaimed he, as he threw himself at her feet, but Lollia, with a look of displeasure, commanded him to rise, and not expose her to the observation of slaves, who might promulgate reports injurious to her character. He instantly obeyed, and silently listened to her instructions as to how he should exert his influence with the Senate, describing the character of every Senator separately, with an accuracy that astonished him,—where gold would prove most influential, she gave him authority to stop at no reward the parties might expect—and with those whom she believed to be enamoured of her person, (after ridiculing the absurdity of their hopes,) she charged him to assure them, privately and individually, of her willingness to listen to their addresses, if they

would but exert themselves to save her from the impending ruin.

"Hasten," she said, "and obtain an audience with Narcissus, he has considerable influence over the actions of the Emperor, and I believe is partial to me, if I may judge from appearances, and some few words that have escaped from him lately. He may perhaps counteract the designs of Pallas and Vitellius, with your assistance, on which I feel asured I may depend. Win over Julius Cilo, the Imperial Procurator of Pontus deserves attention from Claudius, since his return with Mithridates as his prisoner. Caius Antistius, the new-made Consul, I fear, is wedded to the interests of Agrippina, but his partner Marcus Suillius is to be gained with bribes, seek him out *dear* Calistus—I did not mean—forgive my words—but seek him out and win him to my interest."

"Rely upon me, lovely woman!" he ex-

claimed as he kissed her outstretched hand, and instantly quitted the apartment.

"Poor moth!" exclaimed the high-born coquette, as he turned his back; "he is sadly scorched! well, well, there is some comfort in knowing that the alluring light is not quite extinguished."

CHAPTER VII.

"As o'er the lake, in evening's glow,
That temple through its length'ning shade,
Upon the marble steps below
There sat a fair Corinthian maid,
Gracefully o'er some volume bending;
While by her side the youthful sage
Held back her ringlets, lest descending
They should o'ershadow all the page."

Epicurean.

Let us now endeavour to present to the imagination of the reader, the gardens of the Emperor Claudius, adorned with the finest specimens of sculptured magnificence—lakes, whose glassy waters reflect the varied foliage of the trees, that grow in cultivated luxuriance

upon their banks,—Fountains, from marble basins, flinging their bright waters over the surrounding flowers,—Sounds of exquisite music, floating upon the rippling backs of countless rivulets, and fanning gales, which, stealing through the delightful avenues of shrubs and flowers, bear upon their aromatic wings a thousand grateful odours,—Pavilions that charm the eye as it roves through the deep vistas of umbrageous trees, and numberless statues of heroes and demi-gods, that hallow and adorn the winding paths. In the midst of this enchanting scene, upon a flight of marble steps, entirely surrounding a small lake, in whose transparent waters, numbers of glittering inhabitants sported,—a young patrician and a noble maid were seated; the latter had suffered one small hand to be enclosed in that of her silent companion, while with the other she parted the luxuriant tresses of her hair, as it enviously fell

in natural ringlets, shadowing her innocent face which, bending downward, blushed at the representation of its own loveliness, reflected as it was, by the pure and polished marble.—A robe of simple white concealed the graces of her faultless form, save where from beneath its graceful folds, the small feet peeped as vouchers for the rest. Octavia had scarcely reached her fifteenth year—the young man by her side, although considerably older, was far from what would be considered an unequal age for her husband; his full dark eyes were fixed upon her with an expression of tender anxiety, and his lips were separated and motionless, as if thirsting for an answer, which the thoughtful maid withheld—at length she raised her eyes, and said—

"Look upon you plant, my Lucius, which grows beneath the shade of yonder plane tree, it stands apart from all the rest—go, place your

finger upon its slender leaf, and notice the result."

The lover smiled and hastened to execute her bidding; the delicate leaf shrank from the warmth of his touch, and Octavia, moving to his side, exclaimed "In this you behold an emblem of my heart, dear Lucius; an unkind touch will make it shrink with pain; I cannot bear ungentle words from you."

"Forgive me, love! forgive me," said he, imploringly, "my breast is torn with such conflicting passions,—love, hope, and fear so strongly rule, by turns, that my unconscious lips pour forth a language reason never knew."

"I have been thinking, Silanus, how populous a city a lover's heart is, and in what a continual state of civil warfare the passions are engaged; what foul rebellions agitate it and prevent the reign of peace—no sooner is one quelled than another rises to deprive her of re-

pose—quell that, and, Hydra-like, new monsters spring up to keep the strife continual. Caligula wished that his enemies had but one head, that he might strike it off at once—a cruel wish! Love is a tyrant more despotic still, and with one blow might quell these rebel passions of the heart, were he himself; but he is sick, Silanus, and yields to coward fears. Be thou thyself his best physician then, and restore at once his pristine health and the heart's ease."

"Octavia! mine are not idle fears. To be beloved by you—to watch your steps—to drink the liquid accents of your tongue—to gaze upon your face and mark each look, change as it changed, be sad or merry as its expressive features told the feelings of your heart—to hover round you with unceasing love, administer to all your playful wants, and chase the thoughts of sadness from your breast—would be a bliss fit only for some god, and I am only mortal.—

The luxury I possess is far too great to last.—Claudius looks coldly upon me, and the next hour perhaps may bring the harsh command that severs us for ever."

"Am I not thy betrothed? Is not our union to be sanctioned by the wishes of the Emperor, my father? Why then arise these painful doubts, which, wounding your own heart, give pain to mine. Whom should you fear?"—The sound of a lyre, issuing from a grove of orange trees, arrested their discourse, and after a short prelude the unseen minstrel sang the following:

"Again I strike the sounding lyre,
But not for wealth or fame;
Far softer hopes my breast inspire,
To win a minstrel's name—
I strike the silver strings for thee,
And supplicate for slavery.

"The sweetest tone of Memnon's harp,
Would greet Apollo's ray;
And when he sank behind the hills,
In sorrow pine away:

So shall this simple lyre for thee
Rejoice, or pine in melody.

" Spontaneous concords from the fane
Of Memnon used to flow;
But these are from that touch of fire,
Which love creates below.
Those sounds, dear maid, were more divine,
But hailed not brighter looks than thine."

The minstrel ceased his lay, and Octavia, turning to Silanus, said " it was surely the voice of Domitius !"

" It was," replied he, with a dejected air, " and he is the answer to the question you have just asked me; it is he whom I have to fear !" Taking her by the hand, he walked silently to another part of the gardens where they were less exposed to interruption, and in an agitated voice, proceeded. " It is perhaps dangerous to utter what I am about to communicate to you, even in these silent retreats, where every leaf may prove a tongue, and bear my words

to other ears than ours. I can, however, speak more freely *here* than in the palace. The Empress has already prepared the means of my destruction, which, though tardy in their operation, will not fail in their effect. By the overwhelming influence she possesses over her husband, aided with the advice of the wily Pallas —than whom a greater traitor never yet drew breath—she will, I fear, effectually wean his affections from your noble brother, and fix them upon Domitius. Alas! for poor Britannicus."

"Who cries alas! for Britannicus?" shouted a noble boy, who bounded from an alcove, screened by a profusion of delightful flowers, which, as they bent beneath his heedless feet, spread a delicious odour all around. "Oh ho! Lucius Junius Silanus! is it you? and my sister too? Lucius! you are always creeping into corners with Octavia. Look, how she blushes! What has he been saying to make

that swan-like neck of your's so flushed, eh? I'll answer for it, some rhodomontade about blue eyes, fair hair, flames, darts, and a breath full of nonsense, all uttered in a whisper, as the South wind woos the lily."

"You are very impertinent, Britannicus!" said Octavia.

"And you a great deal more so," reiterated the boy, "to speak so freely to your Emperor that is to be. Do you not dread the moment when I shall commence my iron reign? No; I think not"—he cried affectionately. "You are aware that I love you too well, and for that reason you play tricks with my dignity;" and so saying, he threw his arms round the neck of his sister, and with boisterous playfulness covered her cheek with kisses. "There!" continued he, "what would a *certain person* give for that, I wonder"—and he looked archly at Silanus, as he spoke. Silanus sighed, and Oc-

tavia blushed deeper than the crimson border of his mantle.

> " Poor Tantalus ! to taste the water tries,
> But from his lip the faithless water flies."

" Poor Tantalus ! poor Silanus !" shouted the youth, and striking his trochus; which, instead of the rings attached to the hoops of inferior persons, had a number of small bells thickly placed round the inside of it, and at every stroke of the radius produced a pleasing confusion of sounds, as it rolled along the winding path, until the foliage again concealed him from the lovers.

" Light-hearted boy, beloved brother !"— sighed Octavia. " And could my father ever consent to injure you ? No, no ! It is impossible. He cannot forget the day when, with a father's pride, he bore you in his arms, and held you up to the admiring gaze of his brave sol-

diers, who waved their shining helmets high in the air, and made the heavens echo with their shouts, till all the gods looked down and shared the general joy—a day of gladness like that cannot be forgotten; nor can he look upon that smiling face, and shut the parent's feelings from his heart. Where did you gather this ill news, my Lucius? It must be false."

"My Octavia! when your brother interrupted me, I was about to inform you of what I now tremble to reveal; but which must be broken to you by degrees, lest the intelligence fall like a thunderbolt from some ruder source, and wither what I would endure a thousand deaths to save."

"What fatal secret have you to disclose, Silanus?"

He took her hand—it trembled as he pressed it to his lips! A moment of unutterable anguish kept him silent. He was about to

resume his narration, when, to their mutual amazement, Domitius Œnobarbus stood before them.

"You have selected a delightful spot for conversation," said he. "The fountains sparkle round you, and the flowers exhale their fragrance to delight the senses; the atmosphere breathes love, in unison with your amorous words and sighs. Positively, you have an admirable taste, Silanus! I never paid this part of the gardens sufficient attention until now. I must remain, and meditate upon its enchantments."

"We will not interrupt your reflections," said Silanus, rising with dignity, and offering his hand to Octavia, who was about to accompany him; but Domitius prevented them.

"Pray let me be no interruption to your dalliance," cried he, sarcastically. "I delight to witness true lovers' interviews; they are quite amusing!"

"You forget yourself! This is a conversation which neither befits this lady to listen to, or my feelings to brook. I cannot condescend to return the insults of a boy; but if boys forget the respect due to their elders, chastisement becomes necessary."

"Boys! chastisement!" exclaimed the youth, colouring with indignation.

"Aye, boys! Go, sir, and imitate the conduct of Britannicus, the true heir to his father's throne, with whom you are now permitted to associate, gain the respect of men by modest behaviour, and do not, by a presumptuous forwardness, draw down their contempt. The golden boss, that hangs upon your breast, is placed there to invite your mind to wisdom, gratitude, to emulate the virtues of mankind and shun their vices—learn them to know its worth, and value it."

"To whom do you address this language, Lucius?"

"To him who has rudely broken upon my privacy; who, having no respect for himself, forgets that which is due to others. But I have no time to waste in answering boyish questions, or in reproving boyish insolence. I shall take the left hand path—beware of again intruding yourself upon our conference." Thus saying, he drew the arm of Octavia through his own, and left Domitius confounded at the lecture he had so unexpectedly received, and meditating plans of future vengeance.

Having rid himself of the impertinent intruder, Silanus again renewed his conversation with Octavia, who listened with eager curiosity—"It is now two years since you were betrothed to me by the Emperor, your father; during that time, the gift, which produced at

first only a slight sensation of pleasure, has become the very spring of my existence, without it my trunk would become sapless, and the green leaves of my youth fall off and decay.—You have become the jewel of my eye, the strong pulse of my heart; your presence brings summer to mind, and in your absence I feel as though a wintry atmosphere encircled me, and the touch of a torpedo was upon me. Being thus essential to my existence, you may readily conceive the pangs I feel at the thoughts of losing you for ever. You may remember Memmius Pollio, whom you have, perhaps, observed in frequent conferences with your father—the cause of them is but too well known; for, yesterday, he moved for an address to the Emperor, in the Senate, artfully worded to secure his sanction, requesting—oh, my dear Octavia! my lips refuse to form the fatal sounds, lest, like long-imprisoned felons, drunk

with joy at their unhoped-for escape, they spread despair and desolation round—and yet it must be told—forgive me the first pang my lips are doomed to cause you, since it is to soften those that are to follow. Ill news falls softer from the lips of those who suffer with ourselves, than from the unfeeling causers of our misery. We are to be parted, my Octavia. The Senate—that vile assembly of detested hypocrites—guided by Memmius, the corrupt consul elect, has drawn up a petition to the Emperor to break the contract he proposed himself, and saw completed, and to bestow you upon Domitius!" An exclamation of acute suffering broke from the lips of Octavia, and, but for the assistance of Silanus, she would have fallen to the ground. He bore her fainting to the nearest fountain, and placing her almost lifeless form upon the steps, bathed her burning brow with the cool water; and as

he held her to his breast, for the first time he imprinted a kiss upon her lips. He called for assistance, and invoked the vengeance of the gods upon his head, for being the cause of her present distress. He uttered her name with frantic loudness, and a hundred echoes repeated the beloved word, while from various paths her numerous attendants thronged in confusion to the spot. Octavia, having recovered from the first shock his intelligence created, bestowed a smile upon her lover, the tender import of which he fully felt,—and retired with her maidens into the palace. Silanus followed her with his eyes, until the closing doors concealed her from his sight, and then slowly quitted the gardens of Claudius.

CHAPTER VIII.

"An old gallant is of so little consideration, that he must give way to a new husband; and a husband is of so short duration, that a new gallant jostles him out of place."

Bruyere.

LEAVING Octavia to the care of her women, we proceed to recount a few circumstances that took place about this time in the house of Pallas, a chief favourite with the Emperor, who, from the rank of a slave, had become one of the wealthiest freedmen in the Court of Claudius.—Cunning, deceitful, specious in his manners, a flatterer by nature, and avari-

cious to a disgraceful extent, he was generally courted for his influences, and detested for his vices. He was sitting upon a couch in an apartment adjoining to the bath, after enjoying the freshness of its waters, one hand supported his head which reclined on one side, in a position of intense thought, the other held a small roll of parchment, upon which his eyes were bent with an expression of triumph and delight —he was in the full prime of manhood, and a profusion of rich amber hair fell in natural ringlets upon his shoulders,—he wore a number of rings upon his fingers, and the fastenings of his sandals were composed of precious stones.

"At length then she has consented to be mine," he exclaimed—" the bright reward of all my labour now yields to my embrace—the cold, the frigid matron, in whose halls the burning breath of wild unlawful love is checked and frozen by

her wintry looks—even she can melt before my passionate eyes, and yield herself my willing mistress.—Oh, happy Pallas!—Yes, my peerless dame, thy wishes to the utmost are fulfilled—I am thy ready slave, but chosen love! —Thou shalt not find thy confidence misplaced—Oh, what a gorgeous picture does futurity present to me! on what a lofty pinnacle I stand, and how much loftier may my station be, if Fortune deserts me not!—The ruler of Rome's ruler!—the beloved of his proud partner on the throne!—my foot is already upon the step that leads to the imperial dignity—already do I look with eagle gaze from my high aerie down upon the plains, where various nations and their petty Kings bow to Rome's conquering arm.—Wealth flows like the broad Euphrates to the sea, and from its many mouths, empties itself into *my* coffers!—Oh! how I pant for that forthcoming time!"

This burst of triumph was checked by the unexpected entrance of Narcissus, whose looks but ill agreed with the wild pleasure so conspicuous in the face of Pallas, which even this sudden interruption had not the power to entirely banish.

"Welcome, Narcissus, to my poor roof!" said he, at the same time glancing with an eye of triumph over the magnificent decorations with which the apartment was adorned.—"Welcome to my humble home—May I presume to ask the important cause of this most unexpected and too condescending visit?"

The brow of Narcissus darkened at the irony this speech conveyed, and he replied—

"I come not here to receive the homage of hypocrisy, or the courtesy of a flatterer! That business of a nature at once secret and interesting, has been the cause of my present visit, you may easily believe."

"Be seated," said Pallas,—but the offer was unheeded.

"You will, I trust, excuse my making a request that the serious business you have to communicate, may be explained with as little preface as suits with your convenience."

"I never waste the time which may be employed with benefit."

"To others or yourself? for my part I hate all trouble that is not a source of profit."

"Well, I will add fresh wealth to your enormous store, if you will aid me to avert the ruin which threatens to descend upon a noble house."

"How can I aid the powerful Narcissus?—He cannot surely imagine that I possess sufficient influence with the Emperor to obtain a boon which would not be granted to himself."

"It is the united strength of Cæsar's friends

I seek—I think you have no more interest individually with him than myself, but I require your aid to assist me now, I may perhaps be similarly useful to you at some future period, and less sarcasm would be better suited to the present time and circumstances."

"I cannot doubt it, wisdom must always flow from the grave lips of such a favourite,—and mirth, however tempted, must check his laughter when Narcissus speaks!—He is the Court oracle, whose smile is favour, and whose frown is ruin."

"I come not here to trifle. At once I proffer gold, for service. I know your intimacy with ONE, who shall be nameless. I wish you to exert your influence there, for which service I promise you a rich reward—what say you?—will you accept the terms?—deal honestly, and say at once if I may rely upon your assistance."

"What, before I know the business you would employ me in."

"You work for gold, and you shall have a thousand talents! what matters it to you for whom you labour, when such a recompense awaits you."

"Why to myself not much should I succeed —but we will take the opposite extreme and say, I fail—am I to rest contented with my labour for my pains?"

"No if you deal honestly, and leave no wit unused to win *her* to our side, then, tho' you fail, half the promised reward shall be yours."

"Which half deposit in my hands, and then tell me the business you will employ me in."

"Here is an acknowledgement, and know it came from the most persecuted of her sex, from the fair hands of Lollia—the rich, the beautiful Paulina—the envied of women kind, but above all of her on whom thy tongue must work, fill it

with flattery and softest sounds, that through her ear may find a passage to her heart, and turn her from the cruel prosecution, she has commenced so furiously; do this and be assured the reward will exceed what I have promised."

"So, then, my influence, it seems, is to be used for the proud daughter of Marcus Lollius, the patroness of witchcraft—the—"

"Hold, Sir! I came not here to listen to the low-born envy and abuse of one who, being unworthy of her countenance, seeks his revenge in slander and detraction. I will not hear the foul pollution ready to escape your lips; she is the scion of an illustrious stock, who boast a race of ancestors from Rome's foundation. It is not from such lips as yours her follies should be breathed, or her virtues profaned. Remember the wide difference between you, and respect that which you cannot imitate."

"You grow too warm, most amorous Narcissus and, I think, forget the position in which we are at present placed."

"By Jupiter! not so. I see before me one, who by a strange and undeserved fatality has been advanced from beggary to wealth—not by his virtues but his vices.—The bond-slave of Antonia, though years have passed since he was wont to wait in basest servitude the orders of his mistress! Can all the glittering gems that deck your halls, strike from the thoughts of those who knew you, the memory of what you were? Do not deceive yourself with so vain a hope; and while you live the life which you now lead, look not to gain observance and respect from any but the wretches who exist, from dire necessity, upon your alms. You may be feared but cannot be beloved; and they who bend the knee to such a master, would gladly see that master in the dust, could they look

forward to another service to compensate them for the loss of his."

"And what care I for their attachment or dislike, so they administer to every want my nature may require? What matters it if I *have* been a slave, when I am *now* the master of so many. Do I not enjoy all the luxuries this life can bestow? Where, then, is the noblest Roman of them all, who can step forth and say, 'My state is happier than thine.' And where's the value of that pompous boast of high descent when all mankind have sprung, or late or early, from sires who owed their being to creatures no more illustrious than myself. Can a long list of ancestors erase from Nature's tablet the first source of human kind, when from the womb of chaos they crept forth, the offspring of confusion and corruption? Leave fools to stuff their brains with thoughts of greatness, derived from others who lived before

them. I glory in the foundation that I first laid down, then rose upon, like a proud column mounting towards the skies, and leaving earth beneath me."

"Vain man! the glory that you pride yourself upon, a sudden storm may level to the base from which it sprung."

"Sooner or later all men bite the dust. But how comes it that the great and good Narcissus, who boasts of possessing the Emperor's ear, who patronizes all and bends to none, should deign to seek so vile a thing as Pallas! and come with golden offerings to win the aid of him, his tongue so fearlessly reviles? How say you? Is not my station enviable, when even he can sue for my assistance? Talk no more; or if you must, let it be of your own immaculate self—on whose deservings whole provinces are in a state of wild excitement—for whom they render up the precious ore, and

starve to feed your *humbleness*—while their tongues offer up daily prayers to the gods, to rid the earth of such a worthless tyrant. Nay, sheath your steel! We must not quarrel. For were you to slay me in the contest, you would lose the service for which you are so anxious ; and should I prove the conqueror, I should miss half the fair reward I have to earn, which to my heart is dearer far, believe me, than ten times its full weight of carrion.—Farewell! You will excuse my want of ceremony, as business of importance requires my presence elsewhere at this hour. Rely upon my promise."

" Not upon that, but on the rich reward, which is far more powerful with thee than the command of all-seeing Jove, I build my trust."

Thus saying, the haughty man turned upon his heel, and quitted the apartment. The eyes

of Pallas followed him with a malicious look, and he gave freedom to his thoughts in words.

"Hem,—Narcissus! she might have chosen a fitter messenger. So then Narcissus follows in her train! I'll make that haughty head bend like a willow branch before me yet. By slow degrees the insect climbs the tree, feeding upon its verdure as it mounts, until, at length, it gains the topmost spray, looks down upon the leafless waste beneath, and then—then—what then?—alas! he falls from his seat of pride! So shall *not* Pallas.—Now to business. She will not spare her rival; revenge, in woman, is a fearful thing. Lollia is doomed already, wealth cannot buy up the vast hoard of hatred gathered together for her ruin. We cannot check the avalanche in its fall, when from the mountain's height it thunders down, scattering and whelming in its awful course all that ill

fortune placed there. Oh! my brave mistress! how I yield to thee in all that's terrible! Even I, who on thy bosom have reclined, bow down and fear as much as love thee. Among earth's creatures thou art most resplendent! in thy delicious breath love dips his darts, and poisons them with sweets, which, shot into the heart, fill all the springs of life with extacy; while in thy bosom, proud ambition reigns; thou art a prize worthy of Jove himself! in beauty, Venus might acknowledge thee her equal,—Minerva borrow wisdom from thy mind,—and Juno grandeur from thy stately form! And yet, with all these glorious attributes, thou art mine! Let me consider!—I must strive to make her yield a portion of her resentment against Lollia, or I shall lose the other half of my reward.—Yet, have I not promised Agrippina to pursue this wealthy matron like a trusty hound, nor yield the chase until she falls my victim? how

then will she brook my sudden change?—tongue, perform thy office faithfully, let thy sweet flattery sink into her soul. Friend Pallas, you must be cautious, frame thy speech with skill and artifice, and fold a mantle round thy real designs, that her keen eyes may not detect their falsehood. She promised I should see her at this hour, and, unless my ear deceives me, I hear her footsteps on the marble floor. No! it is her page. Now, boy, thy news?"

Camillus entered the room; the spirit of impudence animated his countenance, and a thorough consciousness of his own importance was perceptible in every motion of his body.

"Tell me," said Pallas, with a rapidity that might pass for eager and impatient love, "when will thy mistress come—is she at hand—or must I fly to her—perhaps she is not well—oh, tell me, boy—I am all eagerness to hear thy

tidings—keep me no longer in suspense, but speak."

"Then know I come with most important news!" replied the Dwarf, letting the words fall slowly from his lips, pausing between each, to admire a ring that glittered upon his finger, or looking him in the face with the most perfect indifference; "this is a pretty gem enough, is it not Pallas? This diamond would serve thee for a torch at midnight, and light thee to a lady's chamber—would it not Pallas?"

"Come quickly to the business that brought thee here, and leave thy foppery to a fitter time."

"Foppery!" drawled out the vexatious dwarf. "Aye, as you say it *is* a foppery, but then it pleases me to look upon the gifts of those I serve—it shows that one's services are appreciated—I hate to labour without some reward —the lamp sickens without its usual supply of

oil—and all the light of my memory will vanish unless some one can give it nourishment—you understand me Pallas?"

"I understand thee not! thou comest upon some mission, saucy page, which I request thee to reveal at once, and trifle here no longer!"

"Trifle! upon my life I never was more serious, I feel my memory oozing out of my ears already, and unless the oil be speedily administered, there will not be a spark remaining in another minute."

"What nourishment dost thou allude to?" exclaimed Pallas much irritated.

"How shockingly dull you are this morning, Pallas," replied the other coolly. "I fear some sad debauch occurred last night, and that your reason, scared away by drinking, has not quite returned."

"You grow insulting, Sir; I shall inform your mistress of this conduct.

"Oh, dear! the trouble would be too much, and I would not put you to the blush on my account, for worlds,—I will myself inform her of your chagrin."

"What brought you here?"

"My legs."

"I mean the business?"

"Eh! dear me! I declare the lamp is quite extinguished."

"Aye, but here comes one that can out-vie the day, and make the sun look but a gloomy orb."

"I would it could strike some I know with blindness," said Camillus, in an under tone, "a shabby fellow!" So saying he retired and Agrippina entered the apartment.

"My Goddess!" ejaculated Pallas, as he threw himself at her feet in a transport of delight.

"Rise, rise!" said she hastily, "we must

for a time forget our mutual passion, and think of graver things; Pallas, I cannot love while hatred still remains ungratified—How have you sped with Julius Cilo? will he assist us in the prosecution of this hated object? woe to his Consulship if he refuses!—Have you been with Æmilius Sabinus, or offered the bribe I mentioned to Calvisius Crassus?—Have you been busy in my service?"

"My lovely mistress, I have not yet been able to gain a private audience with the Consul — and Æmilius is at his villa near Ostoria,—I have dispatched a messenger to him, and may rely upon his services; as for old Crassus he is in my power; and dare not for his life oppose my will,—and yet ——"

"Yet, what?"

"I fear ——"

"Fear! confusion—what is it that Pallas fears?—Her ruin is decided upon—the Fates

and I have shaken hands upon it—Tell me,—is that accursed wretch Locusta consigned to prison?—her evidence may tend to blacken her still more, in the eyes of the tribunal."

"Locusta is secure but,——"

"But what?—what mean these half-breathed doubts?"

"I think, sweet Julia, forgive me the expression, but to gaze upon thee thus, and know that thou art mine, forbids a term of less endearment—I think you will believe me when I vow, that of all earth's creatures there is not one to which this heart pays homage but yourself."

"Have I not given you sufficient proofs of my belief in your sincerity, you have put a needless question,—but proceed."

"In every action of my life, that might affect your welfare, you will acknowledge, I have laboured with a persevering industry, no

difficulty or danger could subdue, until your wishes were completely gratified, and I had nothing more to execute."

"Again I own the truth of your remarks, but to what drama does this prologue lead?"

"Listen! Since first you spoke with me upon this theme, I have revolved it often in my thoughts; weighed well each circumstance that might affect your welfare; nor have I forgotten the crying cause you have for hatred to this woman. But I have considered the difference of your stations, now, in life; and cannot imagine a severer punishment to her haughty spirit, than to permit her still to live in Rome, and daily to behold *you*—the possessor of the glorious prize she threw for, and was overthrown! Envy is seated in her heart, and kindles there a slow consuming flame; to quench which, by a sudden death, were mercy and not punishment.." Here he paused, as if

waiting for her reply. Her eyes were fixed upon him, with a look that made his own seek refuge on the ground. A minute of the deepest interest passed, during which Agrippina spoke not—moved not. At length Pallas resumed his conversation, but with an embarrassed air, which he found it utterly impossible to shake off. "I have mentioned thus much, as the result of my reflections—keeping your interest in my heart alone. Lollia has many friends, and powerful ones; and their murmurs may reach the ears of Claudius, swelled with aggravated circumstances of your persecution; the general voice may second their complaints; should you once lose the Emperor's confidence, how would your enemies creep from their hiding places, and swell the fatal cry of "Down with Agrippina!"—The frame of the indignant Empress shook with emotion, as he pronounced these words; the blood gushed from her heart;

and she tottered to a seat! Pallas, alarmed at her agitation, flung himself at her feet; but, with an effort, she started up, and, in a tone of authority, commanded him to proceed. The look—the tone—were not of a nature to be disregarded, and, still more embarrassed, he continued. "My love! my zeal may, possibly, have led me unconsciously into the sin of rousing your displeasure; but let the motive plead for my excuse. What I have said was merely spoken for your welfare, and the advice rests with yourself, to be accepted or rejected. *I* am your slave for ever!"

"Have you any thing more to say?" demanded the matron, as she rose, collected, with all the dignity of cool resentment in her countenance.

"Nothing," was the reply.

"Then, now hear me; and take good heed you slight not what I say. I am not to be de-

ceived by one, whose every look I can interpret. I know you have been tampering with mine enemies, whose specious arguments have rendered you unfaithful to my trust; attempt not to deny it. I am more grieved than angry at the discovery—for shame! for shame! Is it from you I should expect falsehood and injury? —from you?"

"By Jupiter, you wrong me!" said the hypocrite. "Hear me, brightest of beings!"

"No more!" said the indignant fair. "I would not have thee turn my pity into anger. You have been useful to me, and I have been a liberal mistress. You are now upon the brink, and ready to plunge into the dark stream of treachery. I bid thee to take heed. Awake not my resentment!"

"Oh! how unhappy am I, in being thus suspected of a crime which nothing could induce me to commit—"

"But gold. I know thy weakness, Pallas, and I pity it. Gold is thy god, for which thou wouldest sacrifice thy friends—thy country—nay, thy love! I covet gold; but use it not as thou dost—in senseless shows, baubles, and banquets, that from the memory glide, and leave no impress on the feaster's heart for all that thou hast squandered. It is my instrument, to bind men's hearts to me—they bow to that, and execute my bidding—as *thou* dost, Pallas! You are a favourite with Claudius—more loved by him than all mankind beside—and can do much, if well rewarded for your pains. I will double what Narcissus proffered you."

"Narcissus!"

"Come, come, I know it all; I saw him quit the house, and have not now to learn that he is Lollia's friend. Now mark me; I forgive you for this trip of honesty, but beware how

you offend again. Let the business in which I now require and demand your interest, serve as a warning of what might befall even the *favourite* of the mighty Claudius, should he again swerve from the duty which gratitude and love alike point out to him."

"By every God that now looks down upon us both, I swear never to betray the trust you have reposed in me. Speak your commands; I am eager to obey them."

"Go hence to Memmius Pollio! He has before been serviceable to me, and can again be useful; tell him he *must;* say that I count upon his services to carry on the accusation against Lollia Paulina; bid him secure sufficient evidence, and I will *pay* for it. Aurelius Tullus saw her quit the dwelling of Locusta, for he was captain of the guard that night; his men will also come forward. She shall fly far from Rome—far from the spot where she may

plot my ruin. Her splendid gardens, terraces, and baths, must be transferred to me. But hold—I go too far—first let us crush the hated owner of them, then talk of their disposal.—She is already aware that proceedings have commenced. So far I have prevailed with Julius Cilo, and the cause will speedily be brought to issue. Vitellius will conduct the prosecution, and in him you are certain of a faithful adherent to your interests.—Now, hasten to Memmius; use all the eloquence you can command—spare not for promises—tell him how much I hold him in my heart, and urge him to assist Vitellius—there, take my hand in proof of my forgiveness, kiss it, and now adieu! Camillus follow me." The Empress quitted the apartment, and Camillus, loitering behind, once more addressed the perplexed Pallas.

"You have made a very pretty morning's work of it. By the clasp of my sandal, you are

a fortunate man. I seldom meet with creatures so charitable, although my acquaintance is as extensive as yours; and my service considerable—in its way. That is a very pretty ring of yours—I mean the ruby. Otho is the most liberal gallant I have met with for some time—this jewel is a gift of his. He has the happy tact of finding out hidden merit, and brings it forth with talismans like this. I did him an essential service afterwards; for, if I have a valuable quality, it is gratitude. I detest the man who is always willing to receive benefits without making a return. You understand me, Pallas?"

"I understand thee to be a most impertinent and frivolous coxcomb, whose tongue wags too fast for his station."

"There, you must pardon me—for it is my station that enables it to speak some home truths, which, but for that, might be the cause of sending me on messages *without* a tongue—

a dumb attendant upon loose desires. Come, come, be generous for once, and say 'as I have netted so much gold, why take this jewel, and the gods give thee long life to wear it, for my sake.' You see I am excellent in pointing out the art of bestowing with a grace—receive a lesson, and bid me adieu! My mistress will expect me. You understand me, Pallas?"

"A plague upon your perseverance—there, take the ring."

"Now, by my delicate finger, I thank thee—command me, I am yours for special service; you'll find me useful. I have a touch of your policy: he that bribes well may count upon good service from me—you understand me, Pallas?" and placing the ring upon his finger, he quitted the chamber, with a smiling countenance, and hastened to overtake his mistress.

Pallas, left to himself, retired to a window, in a recess, and gave himself up to reflection.

"One half of the reward promised by Narcissus, I am in possession of—and must I resign it again into the hands of that insulting boaster? No, no, that shall not be; I never yet paid back the money given as a bribe, and do not now intend to act so inconsistently.—The gold was given for unlawful service; by not fulfilling which, I merit it far more than if I had been the knave it was intended to render me. So, slumber, good conscience! I shall punish those who seek, by corrupt means, to thwart the aims of justice—and that is a good deed. Narcissus will be mad with choler when he finds himself outwitted, and his client deceived—that is comfort to my hate. Now then to Claudius, and fill his mind with deep abhorrence of this Lollia's crime—witchcraft and poison! Hem! It is a weighty charge, and will make the Emperor of Rome shake, in his

richly embroidered sandals, only to hear it —awake his fears, and, with his fears, his cruelty—neglect of justice, and the love of vengeance."

CHAPTER IX.

" Thou, Fortune's champion, that dost never fight
But when her humourous ladyship is by,
To teach thee safety :——
And dost thou now fall over to my foes?"

King John.

Repairing instantly to the palace, he found the Emperor seated at a table in his cabinet. Upon his right hand stood Narcissus, much to the discomfiture of Pallas; and upon his left, a man advanced in years, whose features bore the stamp of high nobility; his hairs were grey, and nearly approaching to white;

his body was bent down with the weight of years, and he rested with his hand upon the table for support. It was the Censor Vitellius —the luxuriant and obsequious Vitellius—the destroyer of Valerius Asiaticus—the friend of Messalina—the counsellor of Claudius—and the devoted slave of Agrippina. They were debating upon what answer should be forwarded to Eunones, prince of the Adorsians, to whom the unfortunate Mithridates (after having been deserted by Zorsinees, King of the Saracians, and made war upon by his treacherous brother Cotys, who first betrayed, and then appeared as his open enemy in the field) surrendered himself. He received him, with a promise to act as mediator between him and Claudius, and the packet sent by Eunones was at that moment open upon the table. The eyes of the Emperor wandered over it, with an expression which bespoke the indecision of his character,

and proved how much he was bewildered by the opposite opinions of his counsellors.

"And it is my firm belief," said Narcissus, concluding an argument which had occupied the attention of Claudius for some time, "that if the Emperor refuse to grant the request of our new made ally, another war will be the result; in which our coffers will be drained—our soldiers slaughtered—and our honour forfeited."

"Narcissus has spoken well upon this subject," said Claudius, "for, as he says, to carry war into a distant country is attended with expenditure, which ought not to be made on frivolous pretexts or private animosities.—Eunones too must not be made an enemy of so soon. Should he fall off, he might be joined by many warlike kings, who, in their native wilds, would harrass and destroy our soldiery, and

render victory doubtful at the best. Yes, yes, Narcissus! your advice is wise; I shall adopt it."

"Yet hear me, gracious Claudius," cried Vitellius. "Is it so easy to forget the wrongs this daring chief has heaped upon our state—the foul rebellions he has raised against us—the seas of Roman blood his swords have drawn—and, above all, the vile ingratitude of making war upon his benefactor, his protector, who bestowed upon him the diadem he knew not how to wear? Is not Gotzares still in arms against us, leagued with Abgarus and Izates, and when we have the power of striking terror to these barbarians, by making an example of one rebel King, shall we refrain because the foe is not upon our walls?"

"Right, right!" exclaimed the vacillating Prince. "You have spoken the word. Vengeance! I'll teach the viper I warmed, that his

sting should have been turned against any breast but mine!"

"Reflect, most noble Claudius! I implore you," interrupted Narcissus, "upon the danger you will draw upon yourself, if you pursue this course. Vitellius, led by private hatred against this man, would urge *you* to ruin, and *Rome* to infamy! If you send forth your legions to enforce the unqualified surrender of this man, whole hoards will descend upon them like locusts, and a *second* defeat would bring eternal shame upon our arms. Consider, Eunones only asks the life of Mithridates, with your consent, to spare him the shame of being made a public spectacle, and dragged a captive through our streets, to grace the triumphs of our Generals. Surely, sufficient punishment is inflicted in forcing him to wander an exile through the world, houseless, and friendless.—And this Eunones will consider justice, it will

be an example, terrible to those who still dispute your power, let me implore you to exert your wisdom in this weighty matter—although this man has been your adversary, he was a brave one, and valour should be respected even by an enemy, a hero should not be subjected to ignominy. Leave such revenge to wretches like Gotzares, be it our boast to set a milder and more honourable example, and exalt the Roman name, by acts of generosity and lenity.—Remember, Cæsar, this Mithridates is of the race Achæmenes, and is the lineal descendant of the man, who waged that fearful war which bears his name."

"And therefore deserves the hereditary hate of those, whose fathers perished in that struggle."

"Far otherwise, Vitellius—He claims the respect due to the sons of heroes, which only cowards would refuse to grant."

Claudius hesitated for some minutes, but at length decided upon accepting the proposal

of Eunones, and gave Vitellius orders to repair to the Senate and inform them of his resolution.

The old man bit his lip with anger, but retired to execute the mandate.

"And now, Pallas," said Claudius, addressing himself to the favorite, who stood waiting, with the most abject servility, at the entrance of the room, "what is your opinion of my decision?"

"That which it ever was and will be," he replied, in a tone that was intended to express the deep admiration and respect he felt for the wisdom of his master, "Cæsar cannot err."

"Hear you that, Narcissus?"

"Yes, my noble master, and fully acquiesce with him in his opinion."

"That's well said! but I am afraid you flatter me. What brings you here, Pallas?"

"My anxiety respecting your sacred health, which is my last thought when I retire to rest,

and the first thing I supplicate the gods for, when I rise."

"I thank you for your anxiety after my health;—by the bye, you saw me reeling though before you left the palace, last night, eh?"

"Then my lord must excuse my contradicting him, for he exceeds me as far in performing the duties of the banquet table, as in the wisdom of his intellects. I could never see him in the toils of Bacchus; for long before that moment could arrive I should be blinded by his influence."

"Aye, but you have seen me exhilarated by his aid?"

"True, and I have thought, how dull immortal Hermes would appear, should he oppose his eloquence to yours at such a time."

"Well, thou hast a smooth tongue, and a pleasant delivery thyself, has he not Narcissus?"

"None dare dispute your penetration, Cæsar."

"Well, what boon hast thou to ask of me?"

"It is to entreat that you will be pleased to show mercy unto one who has been accused (and I trust wrongfully) of a most heinous offence. Her enemies are numerous and powerful, so much so, that I fear her judges may be tempted to swerve from the plain course of justice, strongly prejudiced as they are against her by persons whom they might fear to offend. Pallas, who knows the lady, will, I trust, second my supplication."

"Great Cæsar, I confess it is my wish to save this woman, although, unlike Narcissus, I fear the accusation is well grounded."

"This is a strange beginning," cried Narcissus, colouring deeply, "I thought you had many *powerful reasons* to believe her innocent!"

"Of whom do you speak?" asked Claudius.

"Of the misguided Lollia Paulina," replied Pallas, hastily, "she has been accused, as you

already know, of having tampered with Chaldæan seers, witches and sorcerers, to obtain an undue influence over your heart."

"Yes, I have heard of it; I have been in danger from her arts. She would have risked my life to gain her ends. Who would think so black a heart could inhabit a bosom so bewitchingly fair? What reason have you to wish I should spare a woman, who if guilty, the wisdom of the Senate must condemn?"

"The plea of uncontroulable ambition"—interrupted Pallas—"the dazzling hope of becoming the bride of Claudius. You may remember how strongly Callistus laboured to impress you with a sense of her perfections; he was her agent, and served her interests faithfully. No doubt he had his reasons for it."

"My noble master," exclaimed Narcissus, with some warmth, "excuse me if I cannot

bear this mockery of solicitude. The noble matron may claim your mercy. I make a strong appeal to your own heart, when I avouch, that if she has been guilty of the crime alleged, it was her love for Claudius made her so. If she is convicted of having used unlawful practices, it was the dread of losing *him* that forced her to resort to them, and brave the dangers attendant upon the discovery of such an action, to win the man her heart concentrated its affections in. How comes it that you," continued he, addressing himself to Pallas, "profess to wish she may escape from punishment, when every word you utter tends rather to aggravate than extenuate her fault, if fault she has committed?"

"I was aware how interested you were in her welfare, and that however deficient my address might be, you would more than fill up the vacancies with your persuasive eloquence. The

truth is, I cannot gloss over ill-timed supplications in so masterly a style as they require; I felt this at the moment I made mine, and crave my benefactor's pardon for the attempt; but you have both the will and the ability! I therefore leave the cause of Lollia in your hands, contenting myself with the seconding your request (as I have pledged myself, incautiously, to do so) although, if I were Claudius, I know the answer I should make to it, and, therefore, shall not be disappointed should the result be otherwise than favorable."

The sarcastic look which accompanied this speech went to the heart of Narcissus.

"This man," said he, "who under the pretence of aiding the supplication of the unfortunate Paulina, is, it is apparent, endeavouring to prejudice your mind against her, proving himself to be as treacherous as he is dishonest. Paulina seeks in you a merciful protector—in

you, most gracious Cæsar, for whom it is her crime to bear an undisguised attachment."

"So much so," exclaimed Pallas, "that she would rather practise magic arts upon your person than lose the flattering hope of calling you her own. Am I not seconding your appeal as you would have me?" continued he, turning to Narcissus, who writhed beneath his scourge, while a smile of malice played around his lips. Claudius observed it and hastened to put an end to the subject.

"Pallas, no more.—Narcissus I shall reflect upon your request, and if the laws of justice have not been too grossly violated, may overlook the woman's folly in consideration of the cause."

"Placing my hopes in your nobleness and generosity, I no longer seek to occupy your time upon this subject." He was about to retire, mortified at having become the dupe of Pallas, when Callistus hastily entered the

apartment. The Emperor started, and in some agitation inquired the meaning of his intrusion. "Keep him off, Pallas—why he looks like an assassin! Jove, keep my life from danger!—Answer man, what means this rudeness?"

Callistus, who had fallen upon his knees, and by that action quieted the alarm but not the wrath of Claudius, ventured to disclose the object of his visit; but no sooner had he mentioned the name of Lollia Paulina, than Claudius, rising in anger, exclaimed "So, then, it is to that sorceress I am indebted for this audacious disrespect!"

"I hope the noble Claudius will not misconstrue the honest zeal that brought me into his presence, but reflect how faithfully I have at all times served him, and dismiss an opinion which is at once erroneous and unjust. I present myself as an humble though eager suitor; and the conviction I have of Paulina's inno-

cence may, perhaps, have rendered my approach abrupt—for which I solicit forgiveness. In this packet, written by herself, I am convinced he will discover how foully she has been calumniated by some who take a fiend-like interest in her ruin."

"You have chosen an odd way to excite my pity! S'death, sir, you have given my nerves a shock I shall not recover for a week to come."

"Your absence, Callistus, is necessary for the Emperor's recovery," said Pallas, with a frown.

"Your counsel is at all times pernicious," said the high-spirited youth; "and until Cæsar commands me to retire, I shall remain."

"By Jupiter! but you are growing bolder, boy!" cried Claudius, irritated at the opposition shown to his favourite. "Is this fit language to be used in my presence? Is this a place to vent your spleen in? Begone!"

"Yet hear me, I conjure you! I have this moment left the lovely Lollia, and had you seen her grief as I did, instead of hearkening to the evil tales so ably spread abroad to injure her reputation, your anger would be turned on those who, by their wicked machinations, have sought her ruin. I have seen those lovely eyes, the admiration of mankind, drop tears as fast as clouds discharge their rain; have heard her voice, whose music fascinated every ear, lament, in tones that would disarm even envy of its sting, the cruel persecution she endures—and between every sob she called upon your name, trusting to find in you a generous protector. Morning and night she supplicates the gods, to move your heart in favour of her helplessness. Your heart—which failing to obtain she once assayed, and, failing, vowed to live a life of mournful celibacy for your sake. Yet is she now accused of crimes she never contem-

plated, and may be sentenced by a chain of evidence, as false as she is true."

"You play the advocate in admirable style; you are wondrous fluent. What is to be your fee, Callistus, for all the trouble you are at for this Paulina?" said the Emperor, with a sneer.

"The reward," he answered, "which is ever the result of a good action—a self-approving conscience."

"You are ready at reply too. I wonder if your tongue would wag as fast were your own life in jeopardy!"

"Against all open enemies my sword will guard me—and secret accusations I despise too much to waste a thought upon."

"'Tis boldly spoken. Now, hear me! I esteemed your father; he was my friend; and the affection his death restored to me, I transferred to you—advanced you in my legions—your conduct has been reported to me—you are

no longer deserving of my care—you have neglected your duty, to become a debtor in Rome to an alarming extent—you have degraded yourself by mingling with midnight factions.—You turn pale! Cast your eyes over the list of names, sent in upon this roll of parchment!" and, throwing it at his feet, he retired with his two free'd men to the opposite end of the room. "Well, sir," he continued, after exchanging a few words with them, "you stand high in the list of—" surprise prevented further utterance, for, in turning to address the culprit, he discovered that the bird had flown!

CHAPTER X.

"Positively you shall not be so very severe, Miss Sallow is a near relation of mine; and as for her person, great allowance is to be made; for, let me tell you, a woman labours under great disadvantages who strives to pass for a *girl* at six-and-thirty."

Sheridan.

Lollia Paulina was seated at her dressing-table, deeply employed in the mysteries of her toilette, when a letter was brought to her by a female slave.

"Echo!" said she, speaking to her favourite waiting woman, "untie the packet, and tell me from whom it comes."

Being told it was from Callistus, she snatched

it from the girl and hastily read it through; the contents seemed to displease her, and throwing it aside she proceeded with her important occupation.

"This paste is shockingly made," said she, at the same time filling up an envious wrinkle that marred the beauty of her finely shaped forehead;—"I'll be the ruin of that fellow if he does not pay more attention to my orders—This composition is invaluable if properly manufactured, and through his insufferable negligence, I shall be detained at least two hours longer than usual, in producing the effect I want.—I should like to know what mysterious business prevents Callistus from coming himself,—he is greatly deceived if he thinks my smiles are to be purchased with vows and protestations—I believe the fool imagines that I love him, Echo!"

"You don't say so, my lady! well, the

presumption of some people is astonishing indeed!"

"Oh! I am sure he does; and he says such things to me of his own passion, that if he really endured but one-half of what he pretends to suffer, I ought to be an envied woman, for every one allows him to be uncommonly handsome. Give me that pencil, Echo! Don't you think this eyebrow requires a deeper shade? I fancy it lighter than the other."

"It is indeed a *little* lighter," replied Echo.

"I wonder," exclaimed Lollia, dropping her hands upon her lap, and throwing herself back upon her seat, "I wonder if Œlina Petina has been accused! If I fall under this prosecution she shall not long escape, I am determined.—She has long been my rival for the palm of beauty, but shall not live to triumph over my ruin. Give me that wash; methinks my skin

has not that transparent appearance to-day it usually possesses. Eh ! Echo ?"

" Indeed, it is not quite so beautiful, but another application will remedy that, Madam."

" So, so, Callistus, you confess you can no longer be serviceable to me. It is the worst confession you have made for many a day, for I can no longer flatter you with hope ; my time is too precious to be wasted in love scenes that bring no advantage. I thank the gods I have not committed myself. I never *said* I loved him, so he cannot accuse me of falsehood, and as for looks and hints, they may be construed in different ways. Eh ! Echo ?"

" My lady."

" Where have you put my ear-rings ?"

" Which do you mean, my lady ?"

" Why those I wore when I was married to that brute Caligula." The vision of the cavern

appeared to her imagination at this moment, and a cold feeling of terror crept over her heart. "That Locusta is a wonderful being," thought she, "I wonder what has become of her!"

"Bless me, madam, are you unwell?—why, you are trembling!"

Roused by the observation of her attendant, she recovered herself with a sudden effort of resolution, and laughing at her maid, taking the rings from her with an expression of admiration at their beauty, said, "Do you remember my appearance that day, Echo?"

"O, perfectly well, my lady, it is impossible I should forget it!"

"I think Rome never witnessed a sight more beautiful or splendid—eh, Echo?"

"Never, madam, you were the admiration of all."

"I think splendour becomes me—why the

jewels I wore on that day, would have purchased six provinces."

"They dazzled the eyes of envy, and turned them into admiration."

"When Callistus comes, you will say I am busy, and that he must excuse my not seeing him to-day."

"Very well, madam."

"Heigho! I feel quite faint.—This labour fatigues me sadly, but the appearance when it is finished repays me, does it not Echo?"

"It ought, my lady."

"I wonder if Narcissus will be here this morning! I must encourage him, he is caught I am sure—his eyes are expressive tell tales, if I could turn the tables upon Agrippina now, that would be a triumph sufficient to eclipse her power at once! Could I but compass her disgrace, I should not despair of being once more Empress—for Claudius has more than once

expressed his admiration of my person, in my hearing, and where could he find a fitter partner!"

"How will you have your hair arranged to-day, madam?"

"Dress it high, let there be about six stories of curls, and be particular in their arrangement. Œlina Petina has put the finishing touch to her beauty at last, what think you Echo? she has had her hair dyed a bright yellow and she looks a perfect fright. Poppea is the only rival I have to dread, and the witch must have some invention, with which I am unacquainted, to make that exquisite complexion! Echo! do you think you could obtain the secret from her woman?"

"I'll do my best, madam.—What other jewels will you wear to-day, madam?"

"You may adorn my hair with the diamonds presented by Messalina, let me have the

cestus to match,—put brilliant clasps upon my purple sandals,—let my stola be fastened with the Egyptian spinther, that once belonged to Cleopatra,—and give me my ring-box, that I may select the most precious to adorn my fingers, for Narcissus must admire my hands this morning."

"What robe do you intend to wear, madam?"

"The purple—be careful how you adjust the folds of it.—Stay—stay—you've made it too full—Do not hide the bosom entirely—let there be enough of it seen to form a contrast with the drapery,—so,—that will do—and now I am arrayed for conquest—Do you think I can fail, Echo?"

"Impossible, my lady!"

After a lingering look at the mirror, Paulina passed from her dressing-room and through the spacious apartments, and rows of domestics in

waiting, to pay her homage as she passed into the hall of audience, where were assembled her relations and friends, to each of whom she was lavish in her expressions of regard. They returned her welcome, with promises to support her cause. In a short time Narcissus was announced, and then it was the whole legion of her attractions were led to the attack. They were too formidable to be resisted, and he was captivated before he was aware of his overthrow. In the course of conversation the name of Callistus was mentioned, and Narcissus expressed his regret that her cause had been injured by so inefficient an advocate. "I do not," said he, "accuse him of want of zeal, but his dissolute and daring conduct has been reported to the Emperor, who is much enraged to find him the associate of persons, who have for some time been suspected of harbouring views inimical to the State."

"The monster!" exclaimed Lollia, with an expression of surprise and consternation.—"Have I been favouring a man whose conduct merits the disapprobation of Claudius? who is suspected—"

"Not only suspected, but positively known to be involved in some detested plot, which we anticipate will be shortly brought to light; although I fear the Emperor's imprudence has already put the conspirators upon their guard."

At this moment an attendant called Paulina aside, and whispered something in her ear.

"Go!" said she, "and tell Callistus I associate with no one whose character is tainted with conspiracy and debauchery. Send him from my gate!" The man bowed and retired.

Paulina turned to Narcissus, with a look that asked his approval of her conduct, who assured her Claudius would be highly pleased at this proof of her attachment to her country and

himself. She then led him to a knot of her relatives, who were conversing, at the lower end of the apartment, upon the difficulties of her case. With these Narcissus joined in conversation, while the busy matron hastened to fascinate the elder brother of Lucius Silanus, who was appointed Pro-consul of Asia, and who at that moment entered the room.—A confused noise from below attracted the attention of the guests, and a servant, with blood upon his garments, rushed into the room, and informed his mistress that the slave, whom she had given orders to repulse Callistus, had been stabbed by that indignant youth, upon the threshold of her door! Paulina turned pale with terror, at the recital of this murder; and Narcissus hastened, with several others, to the place where the body lay mantled with blood! Persons were dispatched in pursuit of the cul-

prit, and all was hurry, consternation, and astonishment.

Callistus, when he quitted the palace of the Emperor, hastened to warn his partizans of the discovery that had been made of their secret meetings; and, to his promptitude, they were indebted for their safety. In half an hour they had quitted Rome, by several gates, after having appointed a place of rendezvous. Although convinced of the dangerous position in which he stood, expecting every moment to be arrested by the authorities, he could not resolve to quit the city until he had once more beheld the mistress of his heart; he repaired to her residence, where the following scene took place between him and the slave.

"Where is your mistress?"

"She is not to be seen."

"Has she not quitted her chamber?"

"Yes."

"Then I must speak with her."

"You must not."

"You are very blunt, slave, in your answers."

"It suits my humour to be so."

"Know you to whom you speak?"

"Very well."

"Why do you not announce me?"

"Because my mistress does not want your company."

"How?"

"She has given orders that she is not to be disturbed by your visit."

"Audacious rascal, dare you to parley with me at the gate?—Hence, to your mistress, sirrah, say that Callistus waits to see her upon business of importance, which admits of no delay—be swift, or dread my anger! Infernal Gods!" he exclaimed, as the slave sulkily withdrew, to execute his command, "what can this

treatment mean? The doors were wont to fly open at my approach, as if by magic, to admit me; and now, without a cause, must I stand slave-like at her porch! there must be some mistake, Lollia could never issue a command so unjust, so cruel, so ungrateful!" and he stamped his foot upon the pavement with indignation as he spoke. A few minutes elapsed, during which his wrath encreased, before the messenger returned; when he did so it was with added insolence in his look and bearing.

"Now sir, your orders?"

"They are to drive you from the gate, young spark!—therefore, begone, and speedily—lest I use violence to enforce my lady's orders—hence—hence!"

"Dog!"

"Beggar!"

The pent-up fury of Callistus now burst forth—he could endure no more—but drawing

a poniard from his girdle, he rushed upon the slave, and buried the fatal weapon in his heart. —He groaned and fell, and the criminal, bounding upon his steed, which stood before the porch, dashed through the Flaminian gate, and galloped at full speed along the Via Portuensis, which communicated with the Haven of Augustus.

Arriving safely at a small hamlet on the shores of the bay, he left his tired steed at the only house of reception for travellers, and hastened down to the beach. It was a lovely night, the moon was ascending like a chaste queen in calm and beauteous majesty —spreading her silver radiance over the subject stars, that twinkled with delight at her approach—and the small rippling waves, fanned by the night breeze, rolled in melodious motion to welcome her supremacy. He paced, with

rapid strides, the sands directing his footsteps to a rude promontory of rock, that rose in sullen magnificence, forming a natural arch to the entrance of a spacious cavern, into which the waters rolled, to a distance of about fifty yards at high tide; but it was then low water-mark, and the beach at the mouth of it was left dry by the ebb; it was not more than three miles distant from the port; but superstition prevented the fishermen and curious from penetrating into its recesses,—for it was publicly reported that supernatural beings inhabited it —and when storms visited the coast, creatures, wild in their attire, gigantic in their stature, and menacing in their attitudes were seen gliding upon its summit—now leaping down into the waters—now springing from the billows, like sea-gods armed with weapons of destruction, or hanging midway in the air, rocked by

every dreadful gust of wind, and shouting with unearthly merriment, while the tempest raged around them.

Callistus continued his course, and in less than an hour (being impeded by the unevenness of the coast in many places, where he had to make his way over rugged reefs, and treacherous sands) reached the foot of the cavern. At the same instant a hand was at his throat, and a poniard at his breast, for he stood under the shadow of the precipice, and a gruff voice demanded the watchword.

"Freedom!" he replied, and the sentinel immediately relaxing his hold, exclaimed, in a tone of unfeigned pleasure and surprise,—

"Ah! Captain, is it you?"

"Yes, it is me."

"The gods be praised for your return, my gallant commander; we have done but little since you left us, we need work, I promise you,

and want a head, for the one you left with us lacks brains."

Callistus passed—entered the cavern, and paused—"Welcome!" he cried, "wild rocks, wild mates, wild home! for ye are all that's left me;—All!—all!" said he correcting himself, in a voice that reproached the word,—"Shame upon my ingratitude! why should I pant for more? Freedom is our watchword—we *are* free! free as the gale that blows upon us—free as the waves that bear us on their backs—free as man first created!"

He whistled, and the ground opened at his feet, revealing a flight of steps, that led into a vault of imperceptible depth; when he had descended to the foot of the rude staircase, he was received with a shout of welcome, that pealed like approximating thunder.

"Well, Sporza, what news?" said he, addressing a young man, who, by his appearance,

was honoured with a rank superior to the rest of the party.

"But little to boast of, Captain," he replied, "we have used our oars to little purpose for the last week; not a galley could we come in contact with, that promised us any reward for our trouble."

Callistus motioned them to be seated, and Sporza took the lower end of the table, while his captain placed himself in that which he had previously occupied. The board was spread with fruits of various descriptions, and the choicest wines of Greece and Campania sparkled in their separate bowls, from which the revellers filled their cups; and their chief, raising one to his lips, drained the contents of it to "Mercury!" The toast was received with a shout by his companions, amounting to about thirty in number, who devoutly acknowledged that god for their tutelar deity. The apart-

ment in which they sat was circular, from which two passages, cut through the solid rock, communicated with others of smaller dimensions, which served as store-rooms. It was decorated with weapons of warfare—head pieces, swords, darts, spears and shields glittered upon the walls. A huge lamp was suspended from the centre of the roof, and on one side a delicious stream of the purest water gushed from the bosom of the rock, murmuring and sparkling for a few yards, and then hiding itself again beneath the ground, like a young virgin veiling herself from the rude gaze of licentious men.

This band of freebooters consisted chiefly of ruined spendthrifts—thoughtless young men—who having expended their slender fortunes in purchasing the luxuries of the town, were too indolent or too proud to support themselves by honest industry. They had most of them been accustomed to superior society, and rather re-

sembled a party of young officers, belonging to some legion, than a crew of daring outlaws.

Callistus, torn with contending passions, retired early to his couch, to brood over the events of the day; but the conviviality of his comrades was not interrupted until a late hour.

CHAPTER XI.

"Famine bestrid the streets!
Beneath whose fearful arch, the multitude
Fell, like the leaves of Autumn."

Old Play.

Agrippina, when she had obtained the consent of Claudius for uniting Octavia to her son, lost no time in getting the contract speedily executed. In her husband's eyes she was a divinity, and indeed her power of fascination was unrivalled. When she was bent upon obtaining any particular object, every artifice

was put in requisition to advance her wishes. The Senate sent frequent deputations to Claudius, to request a speedy fulfilment of the ceremony.—Pallas, the reigning favourite and devoted instrument of the Empress, assailed him with importunities, in public and in private. Vitellis, by whose agency the intrigues of Œlina Petina and Lollia Paulina had been detected and prevented, seconded him in all his applications.—The surrender of Mithridates, King of the Bosphorus, who had so long been a formidable enemy to Rome, tended, in a considerable degree, to aid their solicitations; by exciting the Emperor to a pitch of joy that bordered upon insanity. He bestowed favours upon all he met — laughed — danced — and wept — by turns; ordered a sumptuous banquet to be prepared; and, in conclusion, fixed the day for the ceremony to take place, which was to destroy his daughter's happiness for ever, and

place the germ of power into the hands of a youth, under the controul of an ambitious mother, who well knew how to bring it to maturity and wield it for her own advancement, when an opportunity arrived to put it in agitation.

These rejoicings however extended not beyond the palace. A famine reigned without! The artisans shut up their shops, and walked moodily under the colonnades of the public baths; or sat, with frowning visages, beneath the porticos of the great, conversing upon the rigour of the taxes imposed upon them, and the alarming poverty of the granaries. Corn was too dear for men to purchase, and meat was not to be obtained by any but the rich!—the poor scowled upon the palace gates, or shook their clenched hands with fearful gestures, and clamoured loudly about their grievances. Want and misery was visible in every face, uncontroulable

indignation flashed from every eye, and anguish filled all hearts. Troops paraded in different quarters of the city, and surrounded the public storehouses, whence provisions were scantily supplied, and quietly endured the abuse of the populace, for performing an unwelcome duty—mobs collected and were dispersed by them without injury; but famine rendered them insensible to the duty of those, who were fed by the government to enforce quietude, from a starving population.

"The temples were deserted—for prayers to the gods were unheeded, disease crept on the citizens, and made dreadful havock among them, defying the skill of the physicans, who in turn became a prey to its ravages, and all wore the appearence of sickness, rebellion—or despair.—But the misery of the people was unfelt, and consequently unheeded, by the Emperor, and his Senate—they revelled in luxuries until they surfeited, while the squalid forms of wretched-

ness, that every where met their eyes, could not extract one feeling of commiseration, from the pampered tyrants as they passed along—the surrounding country had been drained of all its resources to supply the city. In every village discontent and misery prevailed, until at last the peasantry quitted the open country, and came in angry multitudes to the Capitol.

A man, who followed the occupation of a carpenter, and who had rendered himself conspicuous by his violent language and attempts to excite the people to acts of rebellion, was dragged before a magistrate, and threatened with a death of torture, unless he delivered up the names of all those who were most influential in urging him to encrease the disturbances. Finding that threats could not prevail upon him to betray his friends, they chose an opposite course, and questioned him kindly about the cause of his unruly conduct. The man

requested in the crowd, whom he recognized, to bring his wife and family before the prætor; his wish was instantly complied with, and a more appalling spectacle could not have been presented than that which now shocked the eyes of the beholders. The man dashed the tears from his cheek, which in spite of himself flowed fast, and endeavoured to suppress the hysterical sobs that prevented the power of utterance, as he gazed upon his suffering family, and pointing to the group, he desired the magistrate to heed them well.

"Look," said he, "yon thin emaciated form is the remains of what, but a short time since, was the perfect resemblance of health and happiness—my wife!—I loved her; we are poor, but are not destitute of human feelings—I loved her, and she poor thing loved me. We assisted each other in procuring our daily bread by honest industry, and cared but little

for the day to come, knowing our capability to procure sufficient for our immediate wants with the labour of our hands. We had—" here a suffocating sensation overpowered him,—he paused to recover himself, and then proceeded—" we had—five children—healthy, comely children. The two, you perceive she holds, were born but yesterday, and now look at them—they are both dead! The poor woman, against my earnest entreaty, followed me out of doors, and will, perhaps, from this walk into her grave! May the God of mercy avert the fate. The shadow standing by her side is my eldest son, and the fainting creature supported by his arm, my daughter—the darling of my old heart in the days of our prosperity, but more dear in this hour of adversity. Foodless herself, she sought for it to relieve our wants; from morning until night, with unwearied perseverance, she has wandered to obtain a little bread.

I had no work, and people have no money to pay me, if I had—it has been exchanged for food—an ounce of gold for a grain of wheat—and now all is gone! The last granary is stripped. The temple of Saturn has flung open its gates—the last grain has been distributed—and we are destitute! Look in the cheeks of that exhausted sufferer (pointing to the poor woman, who stood silently bearing her load of death)—look in the glassy eyes of that young girl—and upon the haggard features of her supporter,—where famine gorges upon human flesh until he surfeits! See what a feast he has already made! What living skeletons his appetite has made of them! With these I answer your question. *For* these I clamoured in the streets and near the gates of our oppressors, by whose cursed selfishness and misrule this plague is brought upon the Heaven-

deserted city.—What think you, noble Prœtor, of my answer ?"

In the midst of his own distress, the kind-hearted Silanus was always seen, where, by his sympathy and benevolence, he could relieve the sufferings of his fellow-creatures. His purse was ever open to purchase a supply of corn, as the few vessels entered the Tiber and discharged their welcome cargoes, for the relief of the sufferers and procure medical assistance for such as had no means of paying for it themselves.—His care and assiduity contributed greatly to the suppression of a fever, which had raged with uninterrupted fury for some days; wherever he was seen approaching, the crowd divided, and formed a passage for the youth to pass and, as he hurried by them on his errand of humanity, called down a thousand blessings upon his head—Women with famished

infants in their arms, called upon him as he passed along, and never called in vain—He would gain a knowledge of the abode, supply them with money for present exigences, and employ surgeons to restore the invalids to health.

One day, being exhausted with fatigue, and at some distance from his own house—he stepped into a cottage, on the outside of the walls, and requested a draught of water from an old man, who was seated in a miserable apartment, with his elbows resting upon his knees, and his face buried in his palms—he raised his head slowly, as if to answer the stranger, stared wildly in his face for a moment or two, and then relapsed into the same position as before—A second application being made, he started up from his seat—uttered an execration upon all patricians, and rushed into the open air.

Silanus unable to account for so inhospitable a reception, remained for a few moments, anxiously expecting the re-appearance of the cottager, but finding, at length, that he had no intention of returning, he resolved upon penetrating further into the abode—With a cautious hand he raised the latch, and entered the room, which he found so dark, that it was difficult to distinguish any object within it,—it seemed totally divested of furniture, and bare walls alone presented themselves.

He paused for a moment, and shuddered as he recognised, in the farthest corner, a bundle of straw, upon which was extended the form of a female, bared to her waist, whose shrivelled skin (through which the bones protuded at the joints) was covered with wounds, inflicted by herself before aid could arrive, to prevent her maniac designs. Her hands were

now tied behind her with strong ligatures, which prevented her rising without considerable difficulty, and her long dark hair hung like a veil over her figure, as if to screen it from observation and the biting cold, but ineffectually—she shivered from its effects, and yet complained of heat. At the first appearance of Silanus she gave a shriek, and shrunk under the straw; but when he spoke gently to her, she entreated him to sit by her side, "for" she said, "you resemble one whom I much loved—poor boy!"—then breaking into the ravings of insanity, she told him how she had been abused by the Emperor, who, after placing her upon the throne, caused her to be hunted from it by dogs! and, pointing to the wounds upon her breast and arms, "look!" said she, "how cruelly they have mangled me! and the cruel tyrant has caused my hands to be bound thus, that the blood-

hounds may come and prey upon my helpless body, unmolested; and then—he keeps me without food! is not that cruel? is that an act for a father? I am his eldest daughter, and was to have been wedded to Lucius Silanus—that dear boy! I was his foster-mother—he suckled at my breast—and ——. But my father thought him too old for me.—Oh! how I loved that poor child! He little thinks of where I am at this moment, or his kind heart would bleed to see his poor old nurse a prey to famine and disease. Do you know, I have not tasted food these three days, and the old man, my husband, has sold all—all!" and she laughed the dreadful laugh of madness. "What a palace am I placed in now! Look, look! how they all stand to hear me speak—as if life or death dwelt upon my tongue. Oh, it is a fine thing to be a Queen! How all the well-fed

courtiers bow as I pass by them, down to the very ground—down—down—down !"

"Oh Jove !" exclaimed the youth, "it is my kind old nurse, whom I have so long neglected to call upon, and who I fancied far beyond the reach of want. Who was that man who fled at my approach ? Well might he hate the sight of such an ingrate !"

"Look, look !" exclaimed the maniac, "what a beautiful room this is; rushes of gold upon the floor, and diamonds running down the walls, in countless millions—what wealth, and still no food ! How like you are to poor Silanus—my dear child ! I call him mine, because he took the place of one that died as soon as it was born—and I loved him as my own from that time ; and so I told the lady who came, with her soft tongue, and offered me large presents, if I would poison him ! I wonder what she took me for ! A brute has

more kindness in its nature than she gave me credit for—and all because the boy is to be married to the young princess! So, as I would not do as she would have me, they came and tore me from my home, and my old man with his grey locks, and the weight of eighty years upon his head? and then they sent famine into the country, and all because I could not injure the poor boy—well—well—well!" Here the poor sufferer became exhausted. Silanus quitted the apartment, and returned again before the old woman noticed his absence, with food and wine. He had likewise procured a couch and covering: he had her placed upon it with the tenderest care; and, at the same time, removed the ligatures that bound her arms. The change of situation produced a favourable alteration in the invalid: her senses from that moment gradually returned: but with them a dejection of spirits, afflicting to behold. When she recog-

nised Silanus a flood of tears came to her relief, and she flung her aged arms about his neck, and thanked him, in a voice broken by sobs, for his generous care; then, looking pitifully in his face, she exclaimed—"this is a sad place to live in, my young master! but where is my husband?" Silanus, who had forgotten the old man in his zeal to serve his nurse, observing something s ir in the corner of the room, approached, and discovered it to be the object of her solicitude. The aged man knelt down at the feet of Silanus, and with tears of gratitude called down a thousand blessings upon his head. Silanus raised him up, and placed him upon a seat, near the couch on which his wife reclined, supplied him with refreshments, and rejoiced to see him partake of them. He could not, however, forget the words uttered by the woman in her insanity; and cautiously enquired, if she considered her-

self able to satisfy him with some information which he required?

"I have but a short time to live!" she exclaimed, "and let my last words be a warning to you:—Your life is threatened!—I know it—but by whom I cannot tell—thus much I can acquaint you with:—A woman called at our little cottage, whose person was remarkable,—her complexion was sallow, her features sharp, her eyes black, small and penetrating, and her figure tall, inclining to a stoop; she was attended by a dwarf, whose low chuckling laugh at intervals, made my blood run cold.—She made several inquiries respecting you, and among others, if I was in the habit of seeing you often?—I answered, 'Not of late—that for some months you had absented yourself, and that I feared I had unknowingly offended.'" Here she was obliged to pause from exhaustion, during which time Silanus laboured to con-

vince her, that she had never done anything to justify his neglect, and blamed himself for being instrumental (by absenting himself so long) to the evils that had befallen her.

" After a short delay the poor woman proceeded with her narrative.—' She wished me,' she said, ' to write and request you to continue your visits as usual, and, taking a small paper from her bosom, informed me that it contained a powder, which it was her wish I would administer in any beverage you might be disposed to partake of, for,' continued she, ' his absence is necessary to the views of one, who will not be thwarted in her wishes.' I shuddered as the murderess gazed upon me, with her searching eyes, watching the effect of her proposition, as a tigress glares upon her victim—I could not for some moments utter a word—my terror destroyed the power of speech.—At length I ventured to enquire, why I was selected to do this

deed of horror? 'You are chosen,' she replied, 'because suspicion will never attach itself to your character; and the motive for removing him, is the Princess Octavia's love for him.—You possess the secret, see that you execute my orders, or dread the vengeance of those, from whose pursuit it would be vain to fly!' Reduced as I was by former sickness and privations, I had only power to reject her offers of reward, and express my abhorrence of the crime she urged me to commit, and then fell into a swoon, from which I recovered to know that I was attacked by a dangerous fever—I quitted my bed with the intention of seeking and warning you of the impending danger but fell upon the threshold of my door, from weakness, and was again ——"

Here a shuddering took possession of her frame—her eyes wandered anxiously for some object in the room—her husband spoke to her

—she eagerly seized his hand—uttered a piercing cry, and sank back lifeless upon her pillow.

The old man looked stedfastly upon her, for a moment—fell upon his knees by the side of the pallet—groaned heavily and dropped his head upon the body of his wife.

Silanus, after giving directions for his comfort, left the dwelling, with a heavy heart, to witness a fresh scene of confusion and distress.—Scarcely had he passed the threshold, when he felt the ground heave under him! and immediately a low murmuring sound broke upon the awful stillness that succeeded, as if the heavens had become breathless through fear at the convulsions of the earth—Alarmed at the threatening aspect of Nature, he ascended the hundred steps, leading to the principal entrance of the magnificent Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, and, from their summit, beheld

the tottering and falling edifices, that with every shock strewed the streets with ruins, and listened with grief to the wailings of the unfortunate multitude wandering through the City, increasing each others terror with loud clamours of despair—The devout thronged the temples which were choked up to suffocation—those who could not obtain access, knelt down in the streets, and heaped dust upon their heads in anguish, calling upon the Gods to restrain their vengeance and save the city from destruction.—Augurs ascended their towers in every direction—Prophets and Seers encreased the confusion of the populace.—A dreadful shock loosened the triple row of columns that supported the portico, under which Silanus stood, and the gilded marble rolled with a sound like thunder down the spacious field of the Campus Martius. A massive block of Parian stone bounded over his head, while he stood fixed

with awe upon the spot, gazing upon the glittering fragments, as they descended with the velocity of thunder-bolts to the plain beneath. —A sudden darkness covered the city, and strange prodigies were seen,—meteors fell from the clouds,—the sun was obscured,—birds of evil omen hovered about the palace of Claudius, and, swooping to the right hand, disappeared with loud screams! Silanus, struck with superstitious terrors, joined the throng that continued to press within the Temple,—from which, after performing his devotions, and breathing his supplications to Jupiter, he slowly departed, and forcing his way through the crowded streets, he reached his palace, wearied with exertion, and filled with sorrow for the accumulated calamities that overwhelmed the city.

CHAPTER XII.

" Oh, might I sit, sublime in air,
Where wat'ry clouds the freezing snows prepare!
Or on a rock, whose threat'ning brow,
The aerial vulture's unreached seat,
In solitary state
Frowns ruinous o'er the affrighted waste below:
Roll'd headlong down its rugged side,
A mangled carcass let me lie,
Ere dragg'd a pale, unwilling bride,
Victim to sad necessity."

Æschylus—'The Supplicants.'

WHILST meditating on some effectual way to relieve the sufferings of the people, the door of the apartment opened, and the young prince Britannicus entered. His countenance was expressive of deep melancholy, as he enquired

after the health of his friend; his gaiety had darkened into gravity, and the sprightly boy, who rallied him but a few months before in the gardens of Claudius, upon his passion for his sister, was changed into a thoughtful youth; keenly susceptible to all her sorrows and the hopeless passion of his friend. He presented a letter to Silanus, "which," said he, "is but little calculated to give you comfort. I feel for you, Silanus, I love my sister, dearly, tenderly; and for yourself, I have an affection which I have not been permitted by fortune to feel for a brother.—But read, and if it is in my power to assist you, command my services; they are at your disposal, not only for my sister's sake, but for yours—I love you with the attachment of a brother. That which I might have bestowed upon the son of Agrippina, had not his conduct prevented it, your kindness has drawn from me as a just tribute."

With a trembling hand, Silanus opened the packet, and read the following—

"LETTER OF OCTAVIA TO SILANUS.

"Since I parted from you in the gardens of the palace, dear Silanus, some circumstances have transpired of too interesting a nature to be concealed from you; and as our usual intercourse has been forbidden, I trust you will not consider the mode I have adopted unbecoming the modesty of a Roman virgin, or the dignity of the daughter of Claudius Cæsar, and your betrothed wife. I will not expatiate upon my sufferings, but leave you to judge how great they must have been, by a brief relation of the events which a few short days brought to light. Upon entering the palace, I instantly retired to my chamber, and, dismissing my attendants, indulged freely the sorrow which your information occasioned. The first emo-

tions having subsided, I endeavoured to collect, from my memory, such incidents as might serve to dissipate your apprehensions of my father's intention to dispose of me to another, after the solemn engagement he so readily sanctioned between us. I recalled to mind every action of the prince, that related to myself, but found nothing to justify any suspicion of the nature you alluded to. His manner had usually been cold and repulsive, nor could I recollect a single instance, in which even a momentary tenderness towards me was at all visible; and the possibility of being united to a man for whom my heart acknowledged no emotion, uncommon to the generality of his species, had never entered into my imagination—Domitius, oh heaven! and must I too fall a sacrifice to the inordinate ambition of Agrippina! My heart grows cold even at the very thought of so fearful a calamity. I am but a simple girl, it is

true, altogether unacquainted with the subtleties of the court, though nurtured in its atmosphere. My years are few, and I have known hitherto only the delights that spring from fortune and high birth: namely, the joy of protecting those whose lot in life was placed beneath their merits, and bestowing the superfluities with which I was indulged upon the few who loved me, and who were deserving of my love.

"But I am wandering from the point—I had scarcely been an hour alone, when my stepmother entered my room. You will readily believe that her presence did not add to my quietude of heart, after what you had revealed to me in the garden; but her appearance, as it must always do, ensured my respect; for, whatever be her errors, there is a majesty in every look, linked with an apparent solicitude for my welfare, which insensibly commands my

silence and attention. At first, she merely commented upon the progress I had made, under the kind tuition of my masters; commended my progress in the Greek and other languages; applauded the little skill I possess in music; expatiated too flatteringly upon my good taste, and gave me, at the same time, some judicious hints, which, if I attended to them, would prove highly serviceable.

"There was nothing extraordinary in all this, for it has been her constant custom. At length she struck a chord that vibrated through my whole frame. You have already guessed what it was, and I *felt* its influence. She spoke in praise of you, and my heart leaped towards her, but, by little and little, shrunk back again, as, by degrees, she talked of obstacles which would prevent our union. My father, she told me, had resolved to make the contract void;—by specious arguments she endeavoured to speak

comfort, while every word she uttered planted a dagger in my heart.

"At length she paused, allowing me to recover from the shock her words produced upon me; and, watching her opportunity, again renewed the conversation. She told me, it was the Emperor's command, that I should henceforth consider Domitius Œnobarbus as my intended husband! She spoke of the favorable impression I had already made upon her son, and tortured me with a thousand circumstances which proved (as she wished me to believe) that his heart was already devoted to me! *My heart* sickened at the conversation; a giddiness seized me, and, the next moment, I was insensible to every thing around me.

"When I recovered, I found myself in bed, surrounded by my attendants, who were busily employed in chafing my temples and applying restoratives. The agitation of the morning

brought symptoms of fever before night, which encreased so rapidly that I became delirious; and, as I learn from those who waited upon me, your name, Silanus, was constantly upon my lips. The Empress, they inform me, seldom quitted my side, and expressed the most lively concern for my indisposition, with upbraidings on herself as the unlucky cause of all. My poor Britannicus was overwhelmed with grief, and knelt and sobbed beside me, alternately upbraiding the Empress and my father, for their cruelty; and calling upon me to speak to him; and when he was removed, as it was necessary he should be, cried so piteously, that the coldest hearts were touched by his lamentations. I continued in this state during the night, and most of the ensuing day, and then the delirium abated; leaving me so exhausted that I had no power to turn upon my bed. The few months that have elapsed since I last saw

you, have been employed in devising some means of having a letter conveyed to you. I have been so closely watched that, until this moment, no opportunity has occurred. I am still very ill; this is one of the few moments wherein I am released from pain, and I cannot better employ it than in writing to one who will ever retain my heart, whatever may be the fate of the unhappy

"OCTAVIA.

"P. S. It is only by stealth that I have been able to commit thus much to paper. My dear brother, who loves you as sincerly as he dislikes Domitius, is my faithful messenger and confidant, and will find the means of delivering whatever you may wish to send."

For a few moments he sat trembling and silent; at length he requested Britannicus (whom

he looked upon as the only friend who could assist him) to remain while he prepared an answer. He commenced—wrote for a short time—then destroyed what he had written, and commenced again. At last he returned the following wild and agitated epistle.

"From the depths of misery in which my senses are sunk—in a state of mind the most pitiable, because unalterable, I shall endeavour to pen a few hasty words, in answer to your dear epistle, which, while it inflicted a wound upon my heart in every line, at the same time yielded the balm of consolation—the assurance of your unalterable love. And am I then to lose you! my nights have been passed upon a couch of fire since I saw you, my days in fruitless endeavours to gain a knowledge of your situation. But the very menials of your father's household, who would formerly fly to execute my slightest wishes, turned from me,

when accosted, without vouchsafing a reply, or glided like shadows from the apartments, as I crossed the threshold, as though I were infected with a deadly plague; and I walked alone through the spacious halls, like some Chaldean sorcerer, before whose dreaded power all Hades trembled. At length I saw Narcissus, as he quitted the apartment of the Emperor, and ran to meet him.—When he had satisfied me that your health was improving, with all the eloquence of misery, I implored him to unfold to me the reasons stated by Claudius, for his ungenerous conduct—I prostrated myself before him, heaped ashes upon my distracted head, my heart was bursting! He waited until my ravings were ended, and after endeavouring to quiet my excited feelings, he replied 'that Claudius, worked upon by the fascinations and entreaties of Agrippina—whose ambition is as boundless as the sea—had at length prevailed upon

him to yield his consent to the appeal urged by the Senate, for an union between yourself and Œnobarbus, at her instigation. Its members, dazzled by her wealth and promises, hesitated not to execute her darkest projects. The motive,' continued he, 'is apparent to all. By breaking the contract with you, her son will gain more power in the State, and by uniting himself with the daughter of the Emperor, should any unforeseen accident remove Britannicus, Domitius would succeed to the Imperial crown. Adopted as he is by Cæsar, and elevated to the rank of coadjutor with him—distributing largess to the people—and permitted to bestow immense donations on the soldiery—he cannot fail of gaining most men to his side; while the rightful heir will have full cause to dread the jealous fears of an usurping Prince. I am already marked out for persecution by Agrippina, whose marriage with

the Emperor took place against my wishes, and she is well aware how earnest my endeavours were to prevent it. She looks upon me as the secret enemy of her son. Pallas is now the reigning favourite, and I would fly far from the capital, and the anxities that keep me sleepless,—were it not for the duty I owe to the Emperor, to whom I am indebted for many favours, and *for* whom I would gladly sacrifice my life!"

"He endeavoured to alleviate the sufferings his recital had occasioned by the most fatherly and sage advice, blended with the assurances of the most sincere anxiety for my welfare and future good happiness, which fell upon my heart like oil on fire, nourishing the flames that consumed me.—I cannot resolve to fly from the place where you reside, though banished from your presence—the blissful moments that are passed, rise to my memory, and

make me linger round the envious walls that conceal you from me.—The stars are not so watchful as my eyes—they sleep in daylight—but my burning lids refuse to close, and my eyes, for ever on the gaze, ache with long watching, and are dimmed with tears!—And are we then to be parted for ever? alas, to all human probability our separation seems eternal! and yet a lurking hope lives in my breast, which, over the conflict within, sheds a benignant ray; HE may not live to complete the union which puts the seal upon our misery—the Emperor's mind may change again, and he may restore you once more to my arms.—Oh, let me cherish this gleam of hope, for it is the only consolation of my almost broken heart. Had our station in life been less lofty, we might have flown from parental tyranny, and have found in our true love a rich reward, for all the perils attending on our flight. But, as it is, the world

affords no spot, where we could rest securely. The royal hunter never would give up the chase, and if we fled to the remotest corner of the earth, the untired pack would follow in the track till my poor doe became their prey at last.—When opportunity permits, do not fail to let me hear from you—your brother urges me to finish this epistle; may every deity watch over you Octavia—and avert the completion of that union, which must inevitably prove the death warrant of your

"SILANUS.

"P. S. I have heard it is the Emperor's intention to visit the Circus Maximus, attended by the Empress and her son.—You may perhaps be there—I may once more behold you."

CHAPTER XIII.

"Love shows all changes—hate, ambition, guile,
Betray no further than the bitter smile:
The lips least curl, the lightest paleness thrown;
Along the govern'd aspect, speak alone
Of deeper passions; and to judge their mien,
He who would see, must be himself unseen,
Then, with the hurried tread, the upward eye,
The clenched hand, the pause of agony,
That listens, starting, lest the step too near
Approach intrusive on that mood of fear;
Then with each feature working from the heart,
With feelings loosed to strengthen—not depart,
That rise—convulse—contend—that freeze, or glow
Flush in the cheek, or damp upon the brow;
Then—stranger! if thou can'st, and tremblest not,
Behold his soul—the rest that soothes his lot!
Mark—how that lone and blighted bosom sears
The scathing thought of execrated years."

Byron.

The proceedings against Lollia Paulina had, meanwhile, been carried on with the utmost rigour,—even her great wealth and influ-

ence were found too weak to support her against the determined hostility of the Empress.—She was pronounced guilty, and the sentence of banishment and confiscation of property, was signed at the instigation of her enemy. The day was tempestuous, and the rain fell continually, when Lollia Paulina, once Empress of the Roman People, and one of the loveliest creatures in the world, quitted the city where she had been the—

"The glass of fashion, and the mould of form!"

her eyes raining tears in concert with the skies, as fast and unceasingly. The exile was attended by a small retinue of friends and dependants, who were attached to her from long servitude or affection, which rendered them superior to ingratitude, and induced them to share the limited fortunes of her whom they had worshipped in prosperity.

"Farewell!" said she, in a voice scarcely audible, as the vehicle descended from an eminence, and rendered the Temples of the Imperial City more minute. "Farewell, beloved Rome! and with thee, every joy this world can give! I shall not long survive the loss of thee! I little thought, when I was placed upon the throne, to be repudiated, and then banished!—My foe has scaled the dizzy height, and cast me to the mountain's base, so bruised and injured that I shall never more set foot even upon its sides.—My sun has set, and my life's journey is destined, henceforth, to be made in darkness!—well, it must have an end!"

Her maidens offered consolation, but finding their eloquence unavailing, they mingled tears with hers. Lollia, though vain, luxurious and ambitious, was by no means a vicious women; she possessed a generous heart, and her loss was severely felt by many.—Vanity, the com-

mon failing of her sex, was perhaps carried by her to an inordinate extent, and the knowledge of her increasing years made her exert every art to conceal the delapidations time had occasioned in her once lovely countenance; no woman in that age of consummate artifice could compete with her, in the knowledge of compositions calculated to hide the ravages it makes, —the toilet was her altar, at which she paid unfeigned dovotion more than half the day, in order to ensure the admiration of mankind for the remaining part of it.

At the close of the second day's journey, they entered a dark defile, sheltered by rocks, whose shaggy brows hung over the abyss in wild and awful grandeur, at the bottom rushed a foaming river, tumbling over immense masses of granite, that had been separated for ages from the mountains on either side,—patches of Pine trees, scattered here and there, presented a

mournful prospect to the eye, and the voice of nature (heard in the roar of the torrent,) gave a solemn tremor to the heart. The road, which traversed the bank of the stream, was rendered almost impassable by branches of trees, which, torn from their parent trunks, by the loose fragments as they tumbled from above, scattered and destroyed all that interrupted their impetuous course,—a few goats were grazing upon the edges of rocks, where human feet had never dared to venture, and upon their jutting ribs and pointed summits, some gloomy cedars towered, frowning upon the glen beneath.—Sometimes the distant sound of the goatherd's pipe floated upon the air, mingling its simple notes with the wild music of the splashing waters, like the voice of mercy in the hour of carnage.

After proceeding some distance up the glen, they came to a rude stone bridge, erected there

for the purpose of carrying the main road to the opposite side, it was in bad repair and trembled over the boiling element, as it swept beneath its solitary arch in a magnificent cascade.—A row of stunted oaks and birch trees formed an undulating line to the top of the precipice, beyond which a beautiful contrast of scenery became visible—instead of the wild and desolate scenery, through which they had hitherto journied, green woods and pastures presented themselves to the travellers' gaze—sheep browsed upon the gently-rounded hills, and on their sloping sides—the river danced beneath the shade of sycamores and fair acacia trees, which grew in wild luxuriance upon its banks, and upon the little islets, linking their green arms, and forming an emerald grotto over its rippling breast—wild flowers bloomed beneath them, and nature smiled above them.

They paused upon the dilapidated bridge to admire the prospect, and forgot their griefs in the pleasure they experienced while contemplating the beauties of that romantic spot, when they were startled by the sound of a horn from a neighbouring wood.—Suddenly a band of armed men issued from it, and rushed towards the bridge. The little party were confounded at the sight,—but Lollia's freedman, Regulus, with a presence of mind suitable to the occasion, gathered together the men who formed the escort, and who, though few, were brave, and to be depended upon, and made a formidable barrier before the litter of his mistress and her female attendants. They were the more surprised, when they discovered that instead of a disorganized band of robbers, for which they had at first mistaken the party, the men who fast approached them were soldiers completely armed,

The wild scream of Lollia when she obtained a knowledge of this fact, was echoed by her women, and reverberated from the rocks.—A shout of hostility from the approaching enemy was the reply, and the next moment the parties were engaged in mortal conflict. Lollia and her female attendants retreated to the road by which they had advanced, and from a rising ground beheld the skirmish. Her defenders were, in all, but fifteen men, and they were opposed to nearly treble that number of soldiers accustomed to warfare, fighting for plunder, or some promised reward, and confident of success.

The fight was furiously contested—for, as the bridge was narrow, the assailants could not bring a greater number into action than the assaulted, and for a short time they fought upon an equality, till the blood of the combatants was mingled with the waters beneath them;—

two of the weaker party were slain, and though not unavenged (having each dispatched a foe before they fell) yet their friends could ill endure the loss of such brave associates. The aggressors ranks were filled with fresh supporters, but the attacked had no reserve, no hope of succour in the unequal contest. The soldiers upon a signal given retreated, and for a moment they believed their valour had triumphed, with a shout of joy they rushed forward to complete it—Alas! they were deceived! —the enemy had retreated to the road, for the purpose of bringing the rest of his band into the action,—and a fresh body of double their number now fell upon them with added strength,—in vain they strove to stem the furious tide, although with every step they backward made—a foeman's corse rolled into the cataract beneath them.—Conquered by numbers they were routed from the bridge in

turn;—but face to face, and foot to foot, they still continued the unequal fight, while one of the party was despatched to aid the escape of their mistress. A whistle was at this moment heard from the rocks behind them, and the exhausted troops beheld another body of armed men advancing on their rear—Hope was now extinct, and they would have flung their weapons into the river, but a panic seemed to take possession of the enemy! All stood for some moments motionless, as if by mutual consent hostilities were to cease between them—Wild and fierce as the tiger in his spring—rapid and powerful as the tempestuous wind, that rends the forest, did the strangers pour upon the astonished soldiery—a dreadful havock ensued—the conquerors were in turn subdued—their Captain fell the last, and with his blood, crimsoned for a moment the foam of the waterfall. The fight being ended, the leader of the victo-

rious party approached the place where Lollia and her women stood trembling among some fallen trunks of trees and loosened earth.

"Madam," said he, "you are free to pass."

The sound of his voice caused the unhappy lady to raise her eyes, (which had hitherto been fixed upon the earth,) and a slight shuddering agitated her frame—she cast her eyes again upon the earth, and a burning blush of shame suffused her face as she uttered the name of "Callistus!"

"Aye, madam," he replied, "it is the same Callistus who but lately worshipped a dear image, and was spurned for his impiety.—The wrath of Jove has fallen heavily upon me. Driven from your threshold, no longer the favored and light-hearted youth you once smiled falsely, yet so brightly upon, I wandered from the city of ingratitude—a beggar. How I be-

came so, I shall not relate. Had not those lips, on which I have looked until my eyes have ached with gazing, breathed scorn and contumely on my name, and caused me to be driven from your gate, as you would dismiss a slave—where once I entered and was received with honour, I had not become a dweller among these rocks, where, all the night, fierce wolves beset my lair, and daylight guides the soldier to my track—where I must wring from the unwary traveller the wealth he bears with him, and steep my hands in blood! And yet I could not know that your destruction was determined upon, without making an effort to preserve you. I have succeeded; and now, madam, for the last time, I take my leave."

"Stay, stay!" cried Lollia, as he passed her, "stay and receive my thanks, my gratitude—stay, dear Callistus!"

"Dear Callistus! Oh! what a chain of

miseries you might have spared me—had you but spoken those words, when, like a dog, I was bahished from your door—farewell! I will not be again deceived—I will not again deceive myself!" Thus saying, he joined his comrades, and in a few moments was lost in the windings of the valley.

"My hour of suffering is come, Callistus," murmured she, as her eyes caught the last glance of his glittering helm; "you will have full revenge." Paulina felt her heart sicken with the conviction, that the ill-fated Callistus had, by her means, become bankrupt in happiness as well as in fame and fortune; and sighed, when she reflected, that of all the high-born and rich, who professed entire devotion to her will, he was the only one who had proved his attachment real and disinterested. Night closed upon the travellers as they entered the gates of the town appointed for her residence in exile, from which she was destined never to depart.

CHAPTER XIV.

"All that with potent teeth command the plain:
All that run horrid with erected mane;
Or proud of stately horns, or bristling hair,
At once the forest's ornament and fear,
Torn from their deserts by the *Roman* power,
Nor strength can save, nor craggy dens secure."

Claudian.

THE grand design of perforating a mountain, for the purpose of affording a passage for the waters of the Lake Fucinus (situated in the wild and woody country of the Marsi) into the Liris—a noble river that runs through the fer-

tile plains of Campania, and loses itself in the Mediterranean Sea) was at length completed. For ten years, thirty thousand workmen had been constantly employed upon this stupendous work, and Claudius, delighted at having accomplished what Julius Cæsar had given up in despair, resolved to preside in person at the ceremony of draining the lake; and, that nothing might be wanted to give importance to and celebrate a work of such vast utility—he commanded that several ships of war should be built for the purpose of a sea-fight, to amuse the people, before the barriers were withdrawn to let the waters off. Troops of gladiators were ordered to be kept in readiness to exhibit their skill and courage at the show, and every preparation for a spectacle of unusual pomp was put into immediate action. All means were put in requisition for soothing the irritated feelings of the populace. Ships, laden

with the golden grain of Sicily and Sardinia, had already dissipated the horrors of famine.—The granaries were thrown open; and the clamorous multitude again restored to the blessings of industry and tranquillity. And, further to conciliate the affections of the people, the Circensian games were revived. These games, previous to the building of the Circus by Tarquin the elder, were known only by their original title, and were the most noble and innocent of the Roman sports, unpolluted by shows of gladiators and wild beasts, which, familiarizing men to scenes of blood, banished the gentler feelings of their natures, and reduced them to a level with the untamed brute. At first these sports (derived principally from the Greeks) invited the attendance of the youth of Rome, who flocked eagerly to exhibit their skill and prowess, where their mistresses might have an opportunity of witnessing it. The charioteers

urged on their panting steeds, and, circling in their course, soon reached the destined goal; while the proud victor waved his crown of palms with graceful motion to the applauding multitude, as he quitted the arena to make way for some fresh sport. Those who were desirous of exhibiting their strength joined with the wrestlers, eagerly contending for the prize.—Then came trials of speed on foot; and the sport of throwing the discus or quoit. But in the time of Claudius, and in the former reigns of Augustus, Tiberius, and Caligula, cruelty was the incitement to visit public shows —to watch the last pangs of the gladiator—to count the wounds his body had received—to bet upon the mortal struggle of two men, compelled to seek each other's life for the amusement of the spectators, as we, in modern times, wager in the cock-pit—or to see the carcass of a fellow being mangled by some wild animal, who re-

ceived for his work of death the shouts and praises of the Roman people.

It was the policy of Agrippina to shew her son in public as frequently as possible, in consequence of which, he never absented himself from any public amusement; and, the better to persuade the people of his capabilities for holding the reins of government, in conjunction with Claudius—he was permitted to assume the dress of manhood, before his years entitled him to cast off the toga prætexta, which was adopted at the age of thirteen (when they discarded the more childish dress with sleeves, called the alicata chlamys) and which they were obliged by custom to wear until the age of seventeen, when they were invested with the toga virilis. The effect of this presumption upon the mind of Britannicus, will be seen in a conversation which took place between him and his sister, the ill-fated Octavia, on the

morning they were to make their first visit to the Circus Maximus.

"My dearest Octavia!" said he, as he entered her apartment, "why must I always see those gentle eyes glittering through tears, whenever I approach? You must be cheerful this morning—or, at least, appear so. What will the people say, if they behold a Princess of the blood overwhelmed with grief, when all beside are yielding to the influence of gaiety and joy?"

"They will say that cruelty alone could lead a heart, overcharged with misery, into scenes where every object adds a new pang to the sufferer—and pity the sorrows which they would not share."

"But they might take your grief for sulkiness; their vulgar minds, excited only by the interest of the spectacle, will not be able to account for downcast looks, where smiling faces

ought only to be seen. They will believe you hate their favorite games, and live in fear of what your influence may effect towards their suppression. This may create ill will;—the populace might rail against my sister, and that I could not bear. Besides, have not I as great a right to weep as you?—when Œnobarbus struts in his full general's dress, and I have only just crept in the pretexta, although he is but two years my senior: and by my faith! I think my wit as sharp as his, although my father has taken him into such favour,—preferring an alien to his rightful heir." Here the tears started into the eyes of Britannicus, which, hastily wiping away, he continued,—"But I will not weep, nor shall you Octavia; we'll hold our heads as high, aye, and appear as merry as Domitius."

"My dear, dear brother!—it is for you I weep, for you my heart is heavy. I think of

you while others sleep—my thoughts of you forbid my eyes to close—I look into futurity, and shudder at the prospect! My own griefs I would strive to bear with fortitude; but, when joined to yours, the river bursts its banks, and my sad heart overflows."

"But fortune may be kinder than she now appears. 'It is only by a knowledge of adversity,' says my tutor, 'that we are capable of appreciating prosperity'—so, cheer up, sister! —we may have brighter days. Oh! sister, sister! do come to this window."—It looked into the court yard, where the escort was in readiness to attend the royal party to the Circus. "Look at old Macro, the centurion! his morion is too big for his head, and Drusus has buried it in it, ears and all. Ha, ha, ha! Poor Macro!—he can't get it off—oh, now he has—dear me, he is in a terrible rage! He draws his falchion! I must run and see them parted,

before any mischief happens." Accordingly he ran out of the apartment for the purpose. The jest, however, was not of so gross a nature as to prevent the young officer's apology from being accepted. At length the clarions sounded, and the Emperor, escorted by a cohort of the prætorian guard, and accompanied by his adopted Nero, entered his splendid lecticæ and proceeded towards the Circus, followed by Agrippina in a similar conveyance, of a more gorgeous appearance. The body of the carriage was of solid gold, as were the legs, on which it rested when placed upon the ground,—richly embossed, and worked with curious devices.—The columns that supported the canopy were of silver; and the curtains of the finest tissue, ornamented with flowers of precious stones.—Eight slaves, habited in scarlet tunicks, bore it upon their shoulders. The couch, on which she rested, was stuffed with freshly-gathered

roses; and the draperies, scented with the richest perfumes of the East, waving in the breeze, distributed their fragrance to a considerable distance.—Octavia and her brother followed in an ivory carriage, decorated with blue and silver, and borne by six slaves, habited in white. Their youth and beauty attracted the attention of all eyes, while their neglected state interested the meanest of the crowd, and caused a murmur of disapprobation to follow the Emperor, which he must have noticed had he not been too deeply occupied at a game of dice *(ludus tesserarum)* with his youthful companion.—This game, so destructively followed up in the present day, was not less famous in the age of Claudius. The dice-box was his constant companion—at home or abroad—in the senate-house or the theatre! Indeed, so devoted was he to the game, that he wrote a treatise upon it for the edification of the Roman

people. Agrippina listened to the murmurs of the citizens, and, in her own mind, had already disposed of such as were of sufficient consequence to raise her apprehensions of danger. Upon entering the building, the eyes of Britannicus sparkled with wonder and delight, his respiration ceased for a moment, and when it returned he exclaimed, in a tone of rapture that relieved his heart—"Oh glorious!"—and was lost in contemplation of the scene around him. Claudius, bowing to the multitude, handed the Empress to her chair of state, followed by Nero, Britannicus, and Octavia, amidst the waving of scarfs and handkerchiefs, and deafening shouts of his obedient slaves—who, while they stunned his ears with undeserved applause, would gladly have buried a dagger in his breast to free the world from slavery; but none dare speak their feelings—each man mistrusted his companion—a look—a sign—or syllable, how-

ever softly breathed, met eyes or ears for which they were never intended.

When Nero entered, in the revered habiliments of a triumphant general, there were some indeed who could scarcely suppress their indignation at the profanation; and when the young Britannicus, in the appropriate and simple habit of his boyhood, leading the dejected Octavia by the hand, endeavouring to cheer her spirits with the tenderest solicitude—a murmur of discontent ran through that vast assembly, which plainly indicated pity for their wrongs, and displeasure for the cause. Agrippina cast her searching eyes around, with a glance in which indignation was tinctured with fear; but those on whom it fell were silenced, or commenced a conversation with their neighbours, upon some subject foreign to their thoughts. In passing to their respective seats, Nero haughtily questioned Britannicus about the ensuing sports.

"Why, Œnobarbus," answered Britannicus playfully, but with a smile of meaning, "how is it that a man of your experience, rank, and talent—as the tunica palmata and the envied picta denote you—can find pleasure in turning a simple boy like me into ridicule? I can give you no more information about the Circenses Ludi than you can give me of your last conquest." The pointed tone and arch expression of the eye, with which the last sentence was pronounced, went like an arrow to the heart of Nero, who, incapable of uttering a harmless sarcasm himself, never forgave the use of it in others, when *he* was the person aimed at; and a smile of bitter import curved his lip, as he silently placed himself by the side of his mother and Octavia, who pressed the arm of her brother to prevent any further conversation, and sank tremblingly upon a seat, provided for her by the side of her betrothed husband.—

Britannicus, leaning against a column, forgot his sarcasm, and the indignant subject of it, in the novel and magnificent scene by which he was surrounded.

The compartition assigned to the Emperor and his family, was situated near the ostia or opening, from whence the horses and chariots started. It was called the Podium—a projecting building at one end of the Circus, with a colonnaded balcony, commanding a full view of the interior. Upon the right of it were ranged the Virgins of Vesta; and upon the left the Patricians, with their wives and daughters, glittering in gold and precious stones; above these, and extending round the enormous building, were the main body of the people—the lower seats, which were of stone, covered with cushions, being reserved for the richer part, and the upper ones of wood, for the humbler orders of society.

The Emperor having taken his seat, the images of the gods were led in grand procession, attended by the priests and various others, on horseback and on foot. Then came a throng of bold competitors for skill and strength—the Charioteers, the Wrestlers, the Dancers, and the Musicians; which, being ended, the priest brought forth a milk-white steer, which, far from being tamely led to its unwelcome fate, burst from its keepers, and with furious bounds dashed round the vast arena, with the speed of a wild horse from its tormentors, bellowing aloud, and tossing its proud head with threatening action. The spectators became alarmed at these unpropitious symptoms, and waited with superstitious fear for the conclusion of the sacrifice. The bull was again captured and led to the place of slaughter; the blow was struck, and, springing in the air with a terrible roar, the noble animal fell dead, beside the altar

erected for the ceremony. The appearance of the entrails were not less indicative of evil—being of a pale and livid hue. The sacrificial fires refused at first to burn, and when by repeated trials they at length procured a flame, instead of darting upwards in a clear and steady column, it spread itself around, as if unable to ascend, and catching slowly and in separate parts the body of the animal—completed the unfavourable omen.—Servius Orphitus, the colleague of Claudius in his fifth consulship, who presided at the ceremony, retired to his seat, dejected and full of terror; the priests appeared confounded; and the people called aloud to stop the games. Claudius, however, in despite of the rejected offering, and the voice of the people, ordered them to proceed; and, after some little opposition, the inclinations of the people overcame the terror that was created by the failure of the sacrifice. The sports, therefore,

commenced with the chariot races. In the centre (and nearly extending to the full length) of the arena, was a wall, four feet in height and twelve in breadth, which the Romans called spina; along this, various statues were ranged, to represent the different deities who presided over the games; and, in the centre of the spina, stood a magnificent obelisk, one hundred and thirty-two feet in height, brought from the plains of Egypt. At each end of the wall were placed three pyramids, called metæ or goals; round these the racers took their course, and he who reached the goal first, upon the seventh round, was proclaimed by the herald as victor. Upon each side of the Ostia was placed a statue of the god Mercury, holding a chain across the entrance through which the chariots came, until the signal was given for its removal. All eyes were directed to this spot—the chain was removed—and four youthful

opponents took their stations for the inspiring race. The Charioteers were distinguished under four different heads—the *factis alba*, *vel albata*, or white faction, whose dress consisted of the simple white tunick—the *russata*, or red faction, the *veneta*, or sky-coloured, and the *prasina*, or green faction. One champion, from each of these separate orders, now started for the prize. The Circus rings with the inspiring shouts of the excited multitude—caps, hands, and tongues, cheer on the rival group—Already they have made one circuit, and Philus, with his white tunick fluttering in the breeze, still keeps the lead he gallantly commenced; again the rapid coursers pass the meta—the second round is made, and Philus, with his golden hair streaming behind him as he cleaves the air, leads still the flying race; but by degrees the skilful Carbo nears the exulting youth, and cautiously awaits the prosperous moment to

gain the inner circle of the course, and put his steeds upon the winning stretch. The people see the blue-robed driver's arts, and murmur their applause—unable to decide who may yet prove the victor in the race. That busy murmur awakens the fears of Philus, who, with cheering sounds, adds vigour to the mettle of his steeds, and thrice the chariot has performed its round triumphant; but Carbo still hangs closely upon his rear, and young Cethegus, with the emerald vest, who oft before had borne the crown away, urges his coursers to a swifter pace, and Marius at length remains behind!—Six times have they galloped round the dusty course, and still the skilful Philus keeps the lead. Now Carbo's chariot is near abreast with him, and Cethegus gains fast upon their rear; they cast their eyes behind, and the white steeds of Marius meet their view, urged to their flying swiftness, close behind—a mo-

ment more, they gallop all abreast! Each charioteer now plies the smarting lash, and with a start the noble horses stretch with added swiftness towards the goal. Now Philus! now Cethegus! now Carbo! and now Marius! thousands of voices shout from every side—they near the goal and with one furious bound the steeds of Marius win the crown of palms!

The very soul of Nero seemed starting from his eyes as he beheld the struggle for the prize, and in that moment he resolved within himself to become one day a competitor for the charioteer's reward. Britannicus viewed the race with a more qualified pleasure, still leaning against the pillar where he at first placed himself. The sight was novel—it was inspiring! but there was something deafening in the shouts of the people; the wildness of their excitation, the sums of money squandered upon the race, the disappointed expression of the losers' faces, and the exulting insolence of the vic-

ners—that cast a cloud over his spirits, and caused him to reflect upon the wiser way to ensure happiness, as pointed out to him by his preceptors: so that when asked by Agrippina, how he liked the race, his reply was couched in terms so cool, that a common observer would have considered him wholly uninterested.

Nero, on the contrary, was eloquent to a degree—remarking on the different merits of the charioteers in loud and animated expressions. Those who were within hearing of the royal party, were delighted with his observations, and the more distant with his gestures—for his words were accompanied with looks and actions expressive of his unalloyed delight.—Marius he could not sufficiently praise (as he thought) in words; but resolved upon taking lessons from him immediately in that art, which so entirely possessed his thoughts, that he could neither think or speak of any thing else during the remainder of the day.

Octavia sat a silent spectatress of the various trials of skill, pale and dejected; there was a heavy weight about her heart which increased at any proximity to scenes of mirth, and the total neglect of the infatuated Nero was the only source of comfort she derived from the entertainment. She was not obliged to listen to hollow protestations from an artful boy, who, in using a language taught him by his mother, uttered sentiments totally foreign to his heart. She looked like what she was—a beautiful and gilded sacrifice; and the frequent questions put to her by the Empress, elicited no further conversation than the simple negatives and assents, which were uttered mechanically, and almost without her knowledge.

Agrippina, surrounded by her attendants, was the admiration of all the Circus. The beauty of her person, the dignity of her countenance, the magnificence of her attire, excited

universal homage; and even those who reprobated her ambition, acknowledged her to be a superior being in beauty and intellect. Upon this occasion she had paid unusual attention to the decoration of her person. Her jet black hair (without the aid of foreign tresses, generally worn by the Roman ladies of this period) was arranged so as to represent a helmet, and the delicious perfumes that exhaled from it spread themselves around; the stola or gown was of finely woven gold, ornamented with a profusion of pearls; and the girdle, which was one solid mass of diamonds, was secured in the front by two rubies of unknown value. Her slippers, in which persons of quality always appeared in public, were purple, but so thickly covered with gems, that the ground work was nearly imperceptible; and the splendour of her dress was completed by the imperial robe of tyrian dye, clasped on the left shoulder with

gems, and richly embroidered with the most curious workmanship. Thus habited, she formed a powerful contrast to the bloated sensualist beside her—for whom almost every diversion had lost its charm, and who now slept soundly on his golden seat, unconscious of every thing that passed.

Agrippina watched her opportunities for gaining the attachment of the spectators, by the particular attention she paid to Britannicus, between the different sports. She kept him by her side, and divided her conversation between him and her own son—but he, aware of the real cause of her attention, paid but little regard to it, and was happy when the commencement of some new game permitted him to retire to his pillar, or convey some consolation to the breaking heart of his sister.

The second exhibition, if not so noble, was by far more interesting to him than the first

it consisted of two troops of boys, mounted on horseback, armed with weapons of defence and attack—who went through all the evolutions of expert warriors—The charge—the retreat, and all the maneuvres of the Roman cavalry, bravely contesting for the victory. What rendered their mimic warfare still more pleasing to him was, that they were composed of the sons of Patricians, all of whom were known to him, and their equipments being of the most costly description, gave them a gallant appearance, which was bravely supported by their spirited contest. Nero, on the contrary took no delight in this innocent amusement, and therefore took an opportunity of making some common-place compliments to Octavia, but as they were not received with the admiration his vanity required, he turned from her in disgust, and addressed his conversation to the Empress.

Next followed the foot races, and the feats of

the athletæ—leaping, wrestling, and boxing.—The pugilists, unlike the more humane manner of modern boxers, wore gloves, in which were fastened heavy plates of lead or iron; it was, therefore, no uncommon circumstance for a man's existence to cease with the first blow he received, if rightly planted. The signal being given, the men were distributed in different parts of the Circus, for the benefit of the spectators. A hundred gallant fellows were forced into the arena, and quietly waited for the signal to exert their powers of strength and activity.—Beneath the podium were placed two of the most athletic and skilful, whose eagerness to engage was heightened by a private animosity. They wore a kind of trowser, called *campestre*, which supplied the place of a tunick, and which was their only covering. Their bodies were smeared with a glutinous ointment, called ceroma, which enabled them to slip from each

other's gripe, and avoid those dreadful clasps, which, by entangling the head of an adversary under the arm, would put his life in jeopardy. To prolong the encounters, by enabling them to escape more readily from so perilous a situation, this custom was adopted.

The combatants stood for some time, unable to determine which should commence the fatal conflict. At length Cluentius, a native of Campania, aimed a powerful blow at his antagonist, which, being warded off by the glove of the other man (Entellus, whose skill in the palæstra vel gymnasio made the odds with those who betted considerably in his favour) was rapidly returned with as little effect. Blows dealt and parried were swiftly interchanged ;— At length, a violent one from the armed fist of Entellus, broke the fore arm of Cluentius, who, unable to use it for assault, held it for a moment as a defence to his body, and with the

other rushed upon his antagonist, careless of himself, so he might be revenged! His heavy gauntlet fell upon the brows of his rival—the blood burst from his nostrils, eyes, and ears! His brain reeled—but still Cluentius was unequal to the contest; they closed, and glided from each other's grasp—then blow on blow the fierce Entellus deals—his left hand holds his adversary's throat, who gasps beneath the powerful gripe, and the full force of his gigantic frame seems drawn into the muscles of his uplifted arm—the clenched hand falls upon the victim's head—the slender fabric bursts beneath the blow—and the soul of Cluentius is gone for ever!

Several other combatants were still engaged, when a circumstance took place which caused them to break off in horror and dismay. By an order from Claudius, the wild beasts were loosened from their dens! Five noble lions, of

Numidian breed, fresh from the mountains, leaped into the circus. At the same moment, the sluices, which were formed for conveying vast quantities of water into the arena for the exhibition of the Naumachia, were opened in every quarter. The water rushed into the circus, and with it the dreadful monsters of the Nile:—crocodiles of an enormous size, kept without food for many days, were again let loose in their native element. The men, terrified at the approach of the furious animals, fighting with one another or advancing to attack them, stood, for a moment, powerless. But six remained, and those, exhausted by their former toil, unarmed and defenceless, destitute of any weapons to inflict a mortal wound, if we except the chirothecæ, (boxing gloves) cried aloud for swords, to sustain the unequal contest; which, by a sign from Claudius, were granted, and the arms of the secutores (a par-

ticular class of gladiators, who fought with sword and buckler) were flung to their assistance. In front and rear the furious beasts were seen chased by the scaly monsters, or, in close contact, dragged beneath the water; now rising to inhale the air (which rang with the acclamations of the people) and now sinking again in deadly conflict with their silent and voracious enemies. The men were soon compelled to defend themselves; the water, which was now breast high, was dyed with blood, and after a desperate struggle, but one man remained to excite the pity or admiration of the spectators. He had, however, but one animal to encounter, the rest had perished beneath the swords of the men, who died, likewise, under the claws or in the fangs of the beasts they fought with. This struggle was long and doubtful; at length, the man, whose body was dreadfully lacerated, defended himself but weakly, and retreated be-

neath the first row of spectators, casting looks of entreaty for some pitying hand to save him. They had fallen into the Euripus, a canal of ten feet broad and ten in depth (which at all times parted the spectators from the actors in the games), and here the dexterity of the swimmer was superior to the strength of the lion, who, unable to feel the bottom, roared with alarm, and splashed about to keep himself upon the surface, receiving numberless wounds from the sword which his antagonist still faintly wielded.

At length exhausted, and seeing no hope of succour in the countenances of the beholders, the brave combatant was about to resign himself to his fate, when a young patrician, who during the sports had sat apart from his companions, with his eyes fixed upon one of the royal party (whose cheek was blanched with the hues of death, as she gazed upon the

barbarous scene she was compelled to witness) darted to the spot, and separating the large folds of his toga, flung a part of it to him for assistance. The hope of life gave fresh vigour to the dying strength of the unfortunate victim; he grasped the welcome succour, and began to climb by its help; but the lion, although pierced with countless wounds, still lingered near his prey. The sword was buried in his side—but the sword arm of the man was in his claws.—The patrician still held one end of the toga he had flung to him, when a number of others, impatient to behold the event of the contest, pressed forward to the edge of the Euripus, and by their eagerness precipitated Lucius Silanus into the canal.

A shriek of anguish was heard in the podium, and the Emperor's family were seen hastening from their seats and quitting the circus. The man and beast sank together in the clasp of

death, and were seen no more, nor even thought of in the interest excited by the accident that befell Silanus, who had scarcely crossed the canal, and gained a footing in the shallow water which covered the arena, when the voices of the spectators were raised to put him on his guard, a sword flung to him from the balcony of the mæniana was dexterously caught, at the moment when a crocodile (who during the late combat had escaped the notice of the people) had opened its enormous jaws to seize upon its defenceless prey. By a rapid movement he evaded the impending death, and by a dexterous blow struck out an eye of the unwieldy monster, who sank to the bottom. Lucius did the same, and for some moments the ruffled waters alone gave evidence that the struggle was not at an end. At length they appeared—the tunick of Silanus was torn and bloody, and the breast of his foe who rose erect above him,

spouted blood from sundry wounds he had inflicted, by skilfully insinuating himself under the creature's belly. The Circus rang with encouraging shouts, and the water (which was ordered to be drained off at the moment the accident occurred) becoming shallower, rendered his motions more free and active. They fell together—the crocodile below, the gallant youth above; who, by a successful stroke, laid open its entrails, as it dropped upon its back.—The victory was complete—and Silanus, exhausted from the exertion, quitted the Circus, followed by the applauding shouts of the delighted spectators.

CHAPTER XV.

" Why is man then accounted
The head commander of this universe,
Next the Creator—when a little storm
Of Nature's fury straight o'erwhelms his judgment?
But mine's no little storm. It is a tempest—
So full of raging, self-consuming woe,
That nought but ruin follows expectation."
' *The Hog hath lost his Pearl.*'

Covered with wounds, he had scarcely thrown himself upon his couch, when a messenger from the Senate demanded admittance to his presence.—It was the last day but one of his Prætorship—a rank which was assigned to him by Claudius and the Senate, in consideration of his high rank and wisdom, which far surpassed his years. The justice and modera-

tion he manifested in the discharge of that important office, had gained him the respect and admiration of the good; but his wealth and high descent were stains upon him in the eyes of Agrippina, which were only to be wiped away with his existence. She saw in him an idol, before whom the people would bow down when Claudius ceased to live, rather than pay their homage to her son. The blood of Octavius ran as purely in his veins as in her own—their relationship to the first Emperor was the same. Britannicus was too young to rule the empire, and who was so qualified as he for the important station, who, by his urbanity and gentleness, had drawn the hearts of Rome unto himself?

He desired his attendant to admit the messenger, and Eprius Marcellus was ushered into the apartment. There was an embarrassment in his behaviour that excited the observation of

Silanus. He enquired respecting the injuries he had received in a mild tone of condolence, but it was apparent that his thoughts were dwelling upon some more important subject.—Silanus, therefore, requested to know the commands of the Senate, but was obliged to repeat the question before he could extract an answer. After a long preamble, which was intended to impress his hearer with a conviction of the sorrow he felt in being selected for a most unwelcome office, he informed him that the Emperor was in great wrath against him, having heard of a plot against the state, of which, it was reported, Silanus was the leader.

"A plot!" exclaimed the astonished Prætor, "what plot?"

"The Emperor," replied Marcellus, "has been robbed of the particulars by one of the conspirators, and likewise of the list containing the names of your accomplices—Callistus has

escaped with them; but Claudius says your name was written upon the parchment. He raves at your ingratitude, and accuses you of a second crime; of which, by my faith, I believe you to be incapable."

"Stay, stay, Eprius! let me hear one accusation at a time. Will any person step forward boldly as my accuser? Or am I to be the victim of some secret foe, who, confident of my innocence, has by a subtle artifice worked upon the Emperor to wound my honour in the dark, for fear the light of day should strike the liar blind? What is it I am called upon to do, to prove my innocence and that wretch's treachery?"—Marcellus became more embarrassed, and, after an attempt to waive the question, stood silent and abashed.

"You do not answer me," continued Lucius. "You tell me I am accused of plotting against the government, yet will not tell the nature

of the plot, or what I am required to do to justify myself."

"I am not authorized to speak upon the subject."

"Why then came you here?"

"To inform you that the office of Prætor is no longer in your keeping."

"Why, man, to-morrow ends my office by law. I must have been out of my senses not to choose, in the whole year which I have held it, a fitter time to plot than at the moment I am about to resign it! Come, come! reveal this mighty secret to me at once—there needs no mystery. If I am guilty, I must be acquainted with every thing better than you are; and if otherwise, it is but fair that you should give me some information of the why—the where—and the how I became so terrible."

"It is not in my power to gratify your wish. I bring an edict from the assembled Senate—

wherein it is exacted, that you resign the office they have pronounced you incapable of holding any longer, with safety to the state. It is signed by the Emperor."

"Nay, if it be Cæsar's will, I am aware that all assertions of my innocence will prove ineffectual. My ruin, I suppose, is resolved upon; and I am too indifferent about life to seek its prolongation, for a single hour."

"I know not that the Emperor has any design against your life, Silanus!"

"It may be so; but you said something of another charge that had been brought against me. I trust it is founded upon as weak a basis as the former."

"Indeed, it is one of so revolting a nature, that I regret my duty obliges me to speak of it."

"Nay, then, I praise the wisdom of the fathers, in having selected so able a messenger;

the modesty of your bearing, and the delicacy you invariably use in offices of this nature, deserve the greatest commendation"—said Silanus, ironically.

"You flatter me," replied Marcellus, with a sneer—"but I grieve to say that you are accused of having a criminal intercourse with your sister, Junia Calvina."

"Immortal Jove!" exclaimed the astonished youth, as he started from the bed, "can there exist such villainy on earth! What ho! Serranus, bring me my robe, and let me hasten to the senate. Furies and death!

"Be patient, young man; this rage but ill becomes your rank."

"Rank! what is rank to me; when every slave can breathe his pestilential breath upon me, and tarnish the fair name I have hitherto enjoyed and laboured to maintain? What matters it that Cæsar's blood runs in my veins, if

every base-born hind can stab my fame, and justice wink at the atrocious calumny? Serranus! why do you loiter thus?—Patient! I thank you for your cool advice. Snatch honor, fame, integrity, all that can make existence valuable from a man, make him the scorn of his fellow-creatures, and tell him to be patient! Had I my accuser in my gripe, I'd prove the patient feeling of my heart.—And thou! thou cold-blooded, audacious tool of tools, how darest thou look plain honesty in the face, and not sink down into the earth for shame?—My Junia! my dear sister! I will avenge thee—terribly avenge thee. Lace my sandals quickly, good Serranus. Ha! ha! a noble plot!—were Claudius and his Senators before me, I would tell him and them they lied!—nay, never mind that strap—bring me my toga."

"You are too hot; the Emperor acts upon

an information laid against you, and the senate have considered—"

"That the Emperor is right, although he dare not bring his witnesses! Oh, noble Emperor!—oh, upright senate!—The curse of good men stick to him and it.—Jove! look down in pity on our wrongs. Go, Eprius Marcellus, to your incestuous ruler, who overturned the sacred laws of Rome, and made it lawful for the uncle to lead his brother's daughter to his bed, and ask him, if, throughout his mighty empire, he could find one man base enough to second him in his most infamous example?—My sister! my dear sister! is it by creatures such as these our innocent attachment is to be made our shame!—Go, sir, and tell your brutal master, that had he not been guilty of a crime equal to that he charges me with, the thought would never have presented itself to ground my ruin on."

With his wounds streaming afresh, and frantic with passion, Silanus rushed from his chamber to the forum, where Claudius sat in state, for the nominal purpose of administering justice to his subjects. The crowd made way for him as he approached, and received him with loud cheers from every side. His animated countenance excited their curiosity; while the still flowing wounds they beheld him receive in the circus, called forth their admiration. He stood proudly before the Emperor (who trembled at the appearance he presented) and loudly demanded to be heard. "Hear me, fellow-citizens," he exclaimed, "for my cause is of that sacred nature, that it must take precedence of every other feeling in your breasts; no other will ye consent to hear when mine shall once be named, but let all else stand over for the one in which the hearts of all of ye will list. In it the peace of families is wound—desert it, and

the thread of happiness is snapped for ever. Fathers and matrons, your sons and virgin daughters alike will feel my cause their own.—Grant me then your patience countrymen!—and you, mighty Claudius, as you sit here in justice, listen to my complaint, and let your indignation fall heavily upon my wronger."

"What means this interruption?" cried the Emperor, choaking with rage and terror, "lictors! advance—I will not have the course of justice thus rudely interrupted by a madman! Is there no respect remaining for my office!—By Jupiter, this insolence is not to be borne! Silanus retire; I warn you not to tempt my anger farther. If you have any just complaint to make, let me have timely knowledge of when you mean to bring it before my tribunal. But dare not to stop me thus in the act of redressing the grievances of my people. Remove him from the forum, lictors, instantly."

The men advanced to execute their orders; but by this time the relatives and friends of Silanus, apprised of his appearance at the forum, had gathered round him, and formed a guard about his person, which kept the lictors at a distance, while he loudly called upon the people to support and hear him.

"You, Julius Marro, whose cause I have interrupted, you will not refuse to grant my suit I am convinced. It is to arraign the defamer of my sister's honor. A Roman virgin claims your aid, to clear her fame from the vile calumnies which hatred and the serpent envy have heaped upon it. I saved your life in Germany—I call upon you here to save that which is dearer far than life to every Roman breast—the honor of a Roman maid!—will you refuse me?"

A general cry of "No, no, no, we yield to you," from the friends of Marro answered the

appeal of Lucius, and Claudius, pale with rage, commanded Silanus to proceed with his appeal. Having obtained permission to speak, he commenced his address with a recital of the services he had done the state, while sustaining an important post in the army abroad, and then alluded to his conduct during the term of his prætorship.

"Since," said he, "I was first entrusted with that important office, by the wisdom of the senate, has there been one single instance of fraud or violence committed by my orders, or through my neglect?"

"No, no."

"Have I not ever been the people's friend; and fulfilled the duties of my station with rectitude and honor?"

"Yes, yes."

"Has not your interest been the object of my care, the theme of conversation? In public, at

the senate-house—in private, by the distribution of my wealth, to those who needed my assistance?"

"Yes, yes."

"My heart leaps, my countrymen, to hear you acknowledge this; for, within this hour, I am called upon by the senate to give up my title of magistrate, and transfer my office to another! as it is stated I am no longer worthy to sustain it with honor, although but one poor day remains to complete the term for which I had a title to retain it by the law."

"Shame to the senate! Shame to Claudius! you shall not resign it, Lucius, till the time has expired!" was shouted and echoed by many voices, while the eyes of all were turned upon Claudius, with an expression that made him shrink at their angry glances.—Silanus, then proceeded.

"But I should give you my friends, the

reasons assigned for loading me with this disgrace, which I am required to bear without a murmur."

"You shall not submit to it!" was reiterated from various quarters.

"Nay, hear me, fellow-citizens; if the loathsome crime of which I am accused had been performed by me, I should deserve your hatred and contempt,—the torture—flaying—instant and ignominious death from the Tarpeian rock. No punishment, in my mind, could be too cruel for the perpetrator of so foul a sin:—the heart sickens and imagination is blinded at the thought of it. It is a crime which, until this polluted age, was punishable, by the Roman law, with death; but which is now converted into a privilege, and sanctioned by an edict calculated to call forth the hatred of all posterity—I mean the crime of incest!"

A dreadful yell of execration followed the

words of Silanus, and every eye flashed with indignation upon the Emperor—who rose to speak, but was obliged to yield that privilege to Silanus, who, encouraged by the people proceeded.

"This crime which I am secretly, not publicly accused of having committed, with my own Sister—together with a fable of my being disaffected towards the interests of the state, are the grounds upon which they hope to consummate my disgrace. These are the reasons alleged for removing me from my office, and if the statements could be proved, most just would be the sentence that removed me from the earth, as a monster, hateful to gods and men. Many of you have seen my sister—is there a man among you who would tax that maiden with the committal of so foul a crime! She, around whom the dignity of innocence and purity is folded like a garment—whose beauty

is the theme of every tongue, whose goodness is recorded in every heart. But why was this charge made?—why was the honor of a noble house to be destroyed by such an accusation?—Has not the truth already burst upon you like a thunderclap? It was, that as the affinity of brother and sister is closer than that of the uncle to his niece, the sin of Claudius may appear less culpable than that which they would fain have it promulgated I have committed. Is there a Roman who in act or thought would follow the example the head of this vast empire has set, to satisfy a brutal passion, although he has, by a detested *law*, granted permission to the unnatural union. When Rome, in her barbaric years, her pristine age, for want of women, dreaded the dissolution of her strength, our god-like founder rather chose to win his people wives from other lands, than to corrupt the purity of their morals by such unnatural alli-

ances. I now demand that my accusers may stand forth and prove the truth of their allegations against me, or meet the just reward of their unfounded calumnies, from the indignant feelings of the Roman people."

This address was heard with enthusiastic cheering, and Claudius, who vainly attempted to make himself heard, was obliged to retreat precipitately from the forum, guarded by his lictors, who were so roughly handled by the mob that their rods were torn from their hands, to serve as instruments of punishment to their owners. No accuser ventured to appear against Silanus, who was attended to his house by hundreds, that had collected together after the first intelligence of his appearance at the forum.

CHAPTER XVI.

" I see before me, the gladiator lie,
He leans upon his hand—his manly brow ;
Consents to death but conquers agony,
And his droop'd head sinks gradually low.
And through his side the last drops ebbing slow,
From the red gash fall heavy one by one,
Like the first of a thunder shower—and now
The arena swims around him—he is gone,
Ere ceased the inhuman shout which hailed
The wretch who won !"———

Byron.

The day appointed for draining the Lake Fucinus, was hailed with delight by the inhabitants of all the neighbouring towns and districts, who thronged to behold the promised

pageant. The young and handsome damsels of Fucentis arrayed themselves in all the splendour of barbaric finery, eager to outshine their numerous competitors, and win the attention of the Roman youths who composed the Emperor's guard, or followed in his train. Nor were the nymphs of Sora, Arpinus, or Marenvium, less eager to contest the palm of beauty. Every habitation sent forth its smiling faces to witness a spectacle, from which so much was expected by all parties; and the green hills and the shores of the lake were studded with multitudes in their holiday attire. Near to the passage which had been cut for the waters to escape, was a platform of considerable elevation, from which the Emperor and Agrippina might witness the Naumachia. This was covered with embroidered cloths, of the most costly materials, and overhung with a canopy of purple, fringed with gold. The steps, by

which they were to ascend, were covered with curiously worked carpets, the produce of the ingenious Persian—as was the platform, upon which two thrones were placed for the Imperial pair. Near to the Emperor's station, numerous tents were erected for the nobility of Rome, who, eager to witness a spectacle of so imposing a nature, cared little for the fatigue of the journey, and vied with each other in the costliness of their litters, and the gorgeousness of their personal attire. At a distance, marquees of a more humble appearance were spread along the shore, or mingled with the green woods that skirted the adjacent hills, for the accommodation of the plebian orders, who could be plentifully supplied with refreshments, when necessary. The vessels were richly decorated, and of a larger size than any that had been used before on similar occasions, having from three to six ranks of oars. The number of the

combatants who manned them was calculated to exceed nineteen thousand, the principal portion of whom consisted of malefactors! The names of the galleys, and their various devices, were selected from the most formidable objects of the heathen fables. The prows of the Gorgones were ornamented with three heads, meant to resemble the three daughters of Phorcys and Ceto. The centre one represented the most formidable of the sisters, *Medusa*—whose hair, as described by Ovid, was converted into snakes by Minerva, and who was represented as the present possessor of the eye and tooth, which, according to Æschylus, they used alternately, having but one of each among them. On board of these galleys were placed the common stabbers, who for hire infested the streets of Rome and its provinces, enriching themselves by the trade of secret assassination. These were the first that formed a line, prepa-

ratory to the engagement; opposed to which, were ranged an equal number, with prows that represented the sister fates, emblematical of the doom that hovered over the devoted combatants. The crews of these vessels consisted of midnight robbers, who had broken into the abodes of the sleeping, and plundered them of their possessions. But the most noble vessel on the lake was one whose prow exhibited the monster Typhon, with his hundred heads, which seemed to signify the divided powers of rebellious subjects—his flaming mouths, their inflamed spirits and destructive intentions—his iron hands, the merciless slaughter with which they seek to achieve their ends—his eagle talons, their inordinate rapacity—and his plumed body, their continual rumours, scouts, and fears. On board of this noble galley, were embarked numbers of those banditti, who in vast hordes issued from the neighbouring forests, or de-

scended from the distant mountains, to attack whole villages at once, headed by experienced leaders, who consisted frequently of military deserters. There was a reckless courage in their bearing, a contempt of danger, and a determined expression in every face that rendered them far superior in their appearance to the crew of any other vessel on the lake, and a murmur of approbation, mingled with words of pity for their fate, was heard from numerous spectators.

A feeling of sorrow takes possession of the heart when we behold a brave man meet with an ignoble death, however guilty he may be, provided he be not stained with savage crimes; and an organised body of men, under the command of a talented leader, who burst the shackles of a despotic government, and form a society of their own, resolved to conquer or to die in the warfare which they wage, are no

worse in their natures than kings who stretch forth the strong arm of power, and grasp the territories of the weak, who have no redress but must fall, defending themselves, or become the slaves of tyranny and oppression. Sovereigns who seek by war to increase their dominions, are only robbers of a higher class, whose deeds are sanctioned by the selfsame legislature that hangs, without remorse, even the simple depopulator of a henroost.

Claudius and Agrippina at length arrived, and were welcomed by the assembled multitude with long and continued shouts. The prince was habited in a splendid suit of silver armour, and Agrippina, attired in her robes of state, excited the admiration of all who beheld her. No sooner had they seated themselves than the fight commenced. Feats of consummate skill and valour were performed by these devoted wretches, to amuse the imbecile Emperor, and

the callous spectators; and it is surprising that men, knowing the destruction to which they were doomed, with scarcely a hope of life, and none of fame to sweeten death—bereft of that enthusiasm which nerves the heart, when called upon to conquer a foreign enemy, could murder thus each other, for the pastime of a despotic ruler and a reviling crowd. Prodigies of valour were performed in every ship: the slaughter was immense, for those who escaped their more powerful adversaries in the galleys, and endeavoured to escape, by swimming to the shore, were opposed by the prætorian guards, drawn up in hostile ranks upon the margin of the lake, who forced them back, or ended their sufferings by putting a period to their wretched existence.

The Typhon galley still rode triumphant!—Her captain, bathed in the blood of his adversaries, moved like the Dæmon of Battle where-

ever the engagement was most terrible. His gallant bearing, and muscular frame, bared to the waist and scarred with many a desperate gash, excited the compassion of Agrippina, who whispered Claudius to give the signal for concluding the fight—but in vain. He too had marked the brave commander of the Typhon, and with clenched hands and teeth followed him with his eyes throughout the scene of carnage. His youth, his bravery, excited no feeling of compassion in the despot's bosom. As Callistus (for he it was) leaped upon the bulwark of his adversary's galley (made slippery with human gore) his feet betrayed him, and he fell into the lake, almost exhausted with his dreadful labour, and dyed the chrystal waters with his blood. He made for the shore, and the beholders cheered him with inspiring shouts, that echoed among the distant hills; but when he stood within his depth, and with one step was

about to touch the dry land, the spears of the prætorian guards opposed his landing. Unarmed, defenceless, weak and spirit-broken, the brave man stood a moment uncertain how to act. He glared angrily at those before him, like a chafed lion upon his hunter's spear; at last, with a desperate spring, in which he received three lances in his body, he seized upon the centurion, by whose command his passage was opposed, and dragged him into the lake. The bottom being uneven, a slight movement plunged them beyond their depths, and the heavily accoutered soldier, with the devoted and unfortunate Callistus, sank to rise no more—a burst of laughter from Claudius followed their disappearance, who, at length, weary of the Spectacle (mid-day being past) gave a signal for the engagement to conclude,—when a new scene was presented.—The men who but a moment before were engaged in mortal strife

threw their blood stained weapons into the lake, and rushed wildly into each others arms, like long sundered and affectionate brothers—some flung themselves upon their knees, and lifted their arms to heaven in thankfulness for their escape, or called down blessings upon the head of Claudius, who by this act restored them to liberty and length of days.

The gates that closed up the passage for the water to escape were now thrown open, and every eye was directed towards the spot,—eagerly expecting to see the immense body glide majestically on its road to freedom, after a thraldom of unnumbered centuries; but the work proved to be unskilfully executed, the bed of the canal being too high to admit of a free passage at the opening. To sink it lower workmen were instantly employed, during which time, to prevent the multitude of visitors from becoming weary, an exhibition of gladi-

ators was commanded by the Emperor, who had brought the *Cæsariani* with him from *Rome;* and the air resounded with shouts of "*The Postulatitii!* — *The Fiscales!* — *The Cæsariani!*"—such being the names given to those who were maintained at the Emperor's private charge, and who were considered the bravest and most skilful in the world; and, therefore, better calculated to delight the people than such as had received only the common education of the Lanistæ, whose purchased slaves they were; or of those free-born citizens who, for hire or vanity, disgraced themselves not unfrequently by exhibiting in the arena.—Portable bridges were flung over the lake, in a space of time almost incredible, and were instantly thronged with the combatants. Among these appeared one, a Parthian by birth, who, by his skill and bravery, as a leader against the forces of Claudius, had rendered himself pecu-

liarly obnoxious to the tyrant, and he enrolled him in the list of those gladiators, who, by the fortune of war, became his prisoners, and were doomed to risk the life he (from other motives than generosity) had spared, in frequent trials of their prowess—either for the amusement of the nation, or to satisfy his own passion for cruelty and scenes of carnage.—He was a man patient in suffering—irreproachable in his conduct in the school, as well as in the field—one who never mingled with those his fate had doomed him to look upon as beings placed in the same sphere of life, though they had not, like him, *descended* to that sphere; but ready at all times to lend his aid in quieting their discontents, or alleviating their sufferings, both by precept and example. And when the thoughtless braggarts revelled in wanton mirth, and brute-like forgetfulness of their degraded state, he would sit, like the image of enduring

virtue, compassed by a thousand ills—a star, surrounded by broken and contending clouds! His Herculean dimensions, joined to consummate adroitness, rendered him the terror of his opponents in the combat; and, in the various encounters he was obliged to appear, he invariably came off the victor! In consequence of which, he was the favourite whenever such exhibitions were given; and men waged enormous odds whenever he was expected to contribute to the day's amusement—as our modern nobility risk their newly acquired possessions upon a race at Newmarket, or a prize-fight, but with better success.

The combatants were at first supplied with harmless weapons, made of wood, in order to discover the skill of their antagonists, previous to the dangerous encounter; which they flourished with dexterity, delighting the vast concourse of people with their graceful and warlike

postures. On a sudden, at the sound of a trumpet, they flung their hurtless arms into the lake. The secutores (the class of gladiators who fought with sword and buckler) grasping the fatal falchion in their hands, fastened the shield upon their sinewy arms, and placing the iron helmet upon their brows, awaited the attack of the *retiarii*, who fought with tridents and nets; and who, arranging the latter for the important cast, pursued the secutores, watching the favourable moment to catch them in the toils, and despatch them with their formidable weapons. The danger, however, was as great to them as to the secutores; who, if they escaped the snare, became pursuers in their turn, and often overtook and killed them, before they could arrange their nets for a second throw.

At length Titurius, (so was he called) who had hitherto stood unoccupied, gazing upon his

fellow gladiators, was called upon to shew his skill and power, for the amusement of the Emperor and the rest of the eager spectators, against a gigantic opponent. He was a native of Numidia, of colossal dimensions, and considerable ability, whose aim was considered as unerring in throwing the net as Titurius' agility in avoiding it; indeed, more so by the Emperor, whose evil passions were always in the ascendant, and who had not omitted to impress upon the minds of his trainers, that were he by any chance to fail in the contest, their lives should answer for it; his aim being—to rid himself of a noble enemy by the most public and gratifying means to the Roman citizens, and to render the moments of death more bitter to his foe, by a degradation worse than death, —that of perishing by the hands of a common slave. The possessor of the net and trident wore a simple tunick, without any other article

of apparel. Uncouth—even in that barbarous age, which could sanction such exhibitions—remorseless in his disposition—expert in his art—wily and courageous by nature—Titurius could not have had a more formidable adversary to encounter. Yet, with all the determined courage of his nature, and coolness of implicit confidence in his own strength, he placed the helmet upon his head and buckler upon his arm, and grasping the short sword of the secutore, walked calmly into the centre of the platform or bridge. Alternately advancing and retreating, they kept up the excitement of the spectators. Thrice had the Numidian's net been thrown, and as often had the agility of Titurius evaded the impending danger; while the former as skilfully avoided the uplifted sword of his antagonist, bounding from side to side, and with his long trident wounding the unarmed body of Titurius—while the loud

shout of "habet vel hoc habet" was reiterated by the multitude. The black, carefully avoiding the stroke of his pursuer, arranged his net for another cast, and flung it with such accuracy that the helmet of the Parthian was captured, but the man escaped, who seemed determined to prevent the possibility of another attempt, so dangerous to his credit and personal safety, for it was impossible, even in such a scene, to smother the desire of conquest in him —with a blow he severed the trident again presented to his breast, and as a hound pursues the grisly boar, he gained upon his now terrified prey, who flung the net once more, but without effect, among the shouts of encouragement and disapprobation of the people, and the next moment beheld Titurius standing over his prostrate enemy, with the blade of his falchion placed against his heart, awaiting the signal of the spectators to save or to destroy him. They

held up their thumbs—the sign for his destruction; but the conqueror, unmindful of their wishes, withdrew from the scene of action.—This piece of humanity offended the people, but most of all Claudius, who foamed with rage at being foiled in his hoped-for vengeance; and he instantly resolved that both should perish—seconded in this determination by the excited feelings of the spectators, he felt no hesitation in giving the necessary order. For Titurius had incurred their displeasure as much by saving his adversary, as the other had by the terror he exhibited at the termination of the combat—so that the approach of four of the youngest gladiators, who had received orders to exterminate them, was hailed with shouts of approbation by the multitude.

Agrippina, to whom unnecessary cruelty was at all times revolting, although in the course of her ambition she never paused at crimes, was

about to whisper in the ear of Claudius "mercy for the brave," but Narcissus, her avowed enemy, prompted by the same feeling, when the words were on her lip, forestalled her and entreated the Emperor to spare their lives. Disappointed at not being able to exhibit her generosity, by the intrusive solicitation of the favorite, passion overcame reason and humanity, and she who, but a moment before, was prepared to plead, like the Goddess of Persuasion, in the cause of pity, assumed the expression of Alecto, and haughtily cried—"Death to the rebel and the coward!"

Her words agreed with the thoughts of Cæsar, who grimly smiled his approbation; and the baffled freedman, casting a look of scorn upon his master and another of proud defiance at Agrippina, was compelled to abandon his suit.

The gladiators were preparing to engage—the odds were merciless, four full-armed men

to two, and of those two but one prepared for attack and defence, the other's spear having been destroyed by Titurius in the late encounter, who seeing the forlorn situation of the Numidian slave, resigned to him the shield he hitherto had worn, and trusted to the sword alone, which had so well befriended him. Placing their backs against the rails of the temporary bridge upon which they fought, to prevent their assailants from attacking them in the rear, the contest began by the Numidian's throwing his net over the body of one while he defended himself from the assaults of another, with the buckler of Titurius, endeavouring to render it offensive as well as defensive, by battering the head of his entangled enemy, so as to stun him. Having effected this (at the same time he dexterously avoided the assaults of the other) he snatched his arms and combatted upon equal terms, having made sure, by a deadly thrust,

that the snared wretch could not rise again to turn the fortune of the conflict. In the meantime Titurius had disabled the sword arm of one, who kept aloof, leaving his comrade to finish the work of death in the best way he could—and the combatants now stood upon an equal footing, man to man.

A pause ensued, in which they took fresh breath, and wiped the moisture from their blood-stained foreheads. Again they closed in mortal struggle—the shock was terrible, but the Numidian's foot slipped in the blood that laved the boards beneath them, and an arm was already raised to despatch him, when Titurius, whom the action of the fight had drawn near to the spot, received the sword of his own antagonist in his unguarded arm, and severed the sword arm of the other gladiator at the shoulder joint.

The Numidian, rescued from death, soon

despatched his maimed antagonist, and then quietly retired to a distance, without attempting to assist the man who had just saved him, although the brave man's blood flowed in rivulets from his body, and his strength was evidently leaving him. Aware of this, he threw his whole collected strength into one desperate effort, and with a resistless blow clove the well tempered head-piece of his adversary! through bone and brain, the fatal weapon cut, he reeled and fell! The deafening shouts of the populace were echoed from the hills, when the Numidian, whose life had been twice preserved by the generous victor, thinking it still unsafe, from the revengeful Claudius, should Titurius escape, rushed upon him behind, and drove his weapon through the almost exhausted body of his preserver. A yell of execration followed the horrid act, but the traitor was not destined to survive it long, with a single blow the villain's

head was severed from the trunk, and, tossing it in the air, Titurius dropped lifeless by the side of the still quivering limbs. But for the exertions of the soldiery, the body of the treacherous slave would have been torn piecemeal; but the persons appointed for the office speedily removed the disgusting object, and sprinkling the stage with fresh sand and dust, left it in proper order for the next encounter.

There was a smile of satisfied malice upon the face of Claudius as they bore away the corpse of the gallant Parthian, which made the blood of those who saw it run cold; while the Empress seemed to struggle with feelings of remorse, as she viewed the lifeless body which, when animated, partook of all the noblest and most generous qualities; she blamed herself as the sole cause of his destruction, and a pang of bitter anguish pierced her heart, at the thought of having stained her fame with another crime

for which she had no palliation. She censured Narcissus as her evil genius, and the passion of hatred grew stronger as she gazed upon him, while he whispered in the ear of his master.

But a sudden burst of merriment directed the attention of the royal party to the bridge, where a ludicrous scene took place. Upon the shoulders of a gigantic man, stood the pigmy form of Anaxicrates, brandishing his tiny sword, and calling loudly for Camillus to meet him there in mortal combat.

"Come forth, thou puffed up spawn of the reeking pools!—why dost thou hide thine ignoble visage behind the curtains of nobility!—I brand thee with the name of base paltroon, who wearest a dagger for the jewelled hilt and not for the good blade.—I told thee that the time should come, when I would punish thy arrogance, before the eyes of those thou did'st most revere;—and now if thou hast any shame,

stand forward and accept the challenge which I give! If not, drag on thy insignificant life despised. I here defy thee—accept my challenge or reject it, as your courage or pusillanimity may dictate!" A burst of merriment followed this address.

Camillus flung himself at the feet of his mistress, entreated her permission to chastise the boaster, which, being granted, he ran, glowing with indignation, to the scene of contest. In imitation of the ancient heroes, who always made it a point to lose a considerable portion of time before they thought it necessary to engage, the following conversational thrust and parry took place.

"I have listened to the boastful speech which it has been your pleasure to address to me, and remember the many opprobrious epithets it contained—all of which might have passed by me unheeded, had not the slanderous accusa-

tion of cowardice been among the number.—That I should condescend to measure swords with such an antagonist, will, I have no doubt, excite surprize, if not anger, among my patrician friends and admirers—but presumption should at all times meet with the chastisement it deserves; and this sword shall prevent you from disgusting their ears and eyes in future. I know the cause of thy revengeful enmity—the beauty of my features render that jolt head of thine an object of ridicule and dislike. Thou art a vile and ugly spot upon the face of nature, and it is a service we owe the gods to wipe it off. Prepare!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Well said, my hero of the perfume box. You do well to make free use of your tongue before you come to deeds, for that miraculous organ never more shall whisper melodiously in a lady's ear. Never more shall that dainty figure sleep in the confines of an essence

bottle. Oh, that my falchion should be destined to spill such feminine blood as thine! I ought to have encountered thee with a goose's quill, instead of steel—a feather should be punished with a feather's spear."

The doughty champions closed wrathfully, cheered on by the spectators; who were delighted with this comedy, which promised to dissipate the melancholy feelings of the foregoing tragedy. The pigmies were expert in the management of their weapons, and though the person of Anaxicrates was somewhat stronger knit than that of Camillus, and his arms considerably longer, which gave him the advantage of keeping his enemy at some distance—yet the other, by his adroitness in warding off impending danger, and judiciously reserving his strength until a proper opportunity occurred to exercise it with good effect, rendered himself by no means so contemptible

an antagonist as Anaxicrates at first considered him, who by various anticks endeavoured to throw him off his guard; now springing to the right, now to the left, then brandishing his sword and menacing to strike—then pausing, as if completely off his guard, until his enemy would make a desperate push, which he expertly parried—then dealt he blow on blow, at head, breast, arms, and thighs, so rapidly that the eye vainly endeavoured to follow the course of his flashing sword. Notwithstanding, the royal page acted in a manner that gained him the approbation of the beholders, till an unlucky prank of Anaxicrates laid him low in the dust—Camillus had raised his arm to deal a furious blow, which the other avoided by darting between his legs, lifting him fairly from the ground, and finally throwing him prostrate on the platform; then placing his foot upon his chest, amidst the cheers and laughter of the

people, said—"I have kept my word with thee. I have disgraced thee. My sword is at thy heart, and it should pierce it; but that I see the foolish multitude point down their thumbs to save thee. Beware, how you offend!—my dagger has a point sharpened for service.—Beware, how you again cross the lion in his path—my spring is fatal—tremble at my rage!" At this moment an affrighted goat, crowned with a wreath of ivy, with a white fillet flying from its head, rushed at full speed plump upon the blind side of Anaxicrates, where its horns became so entangled in the nether part of his garment, that the astonished dwarf could not turn upon his unknown assailant; and being propelled forward by the victim (who, it seems, had as little veneration for Bacchus as for the priests, who were about to sacrifice him to the rosy god) he was fairly, or rather unfairly, butted through the barriers into the lake be-

neath, to the infinite amusement of Claudius and the rest of the spectators. When he re-appeared upon the surface, he called upon the infernal deities, invoking curses upon the heads of all those whose mirth was excited by his ludicrous situation, imbibing between every word a potation of cold water, to which he had at all times an utter dislike, until at length, by the help of an expert swimmer, the valiant dwarf was safely brought to land.

By this time the channel was sufficiently deep to drain the lake, and a magnificent platform erected at the side of it, for the Imperial party to view the completion of this vast work; this was erected under the superintendance of Narcissus, who could not suppress the indignation he felt at the opposition he met with from Agrippina, when humanity prompted him to plead for the life of Titurius. His language, when directed to her, was sarcastic, bitter, and

hard to endure, although his words were smooth as adulation could desire. It was the language of the eye which mocked the flattery of the lip, turning its sweetness into gall; while she, calm as the surface of the lake beneath them, heard all—saw all—with an unruffled brow, and but for the small smile that curled her lip at intervals, she looked like gentleness endowed with patience—but that small smile spoke volumes, and Narcissus read them. The Emperor started from a dose, alarmed by some fancy that had crept upon his slumber, shouting—

"What ho! my Guards! my Guards!"—half angrily and half in terror. "Oh Agrippina! was it reality, or did I sleep? Or sleep I now, and dream that thou art harmless? But now you grasped a dagger in your hand! and now you look concerned to see my terror.—Narcissus! friend and counsellor, tell me; is all that I have felt and feel the mere effect of a dream?

or do I nurse a serpent in my bosom, whose sting is ready to pierce the heart that fosters it?"

The eyes of the Empress flashed with indignation at the absurdity of the question put to her enemy. "For Heaven's sake, Cæsar!" said she, in a suppressed tone, "do not expose your weakness thus; there are other eyes upon you than mine, and your *devoted Minister's*—let not them see the coward fears that shake you. For shame! Be a man; and let not the visions of your slumber influence your waking actions—arouse!—arouse!"

"You are in the right—I am the fool of shadows,—forgive me—but it was a horrid dream."

"Look, look my lord," exclaimed Narcissus, "the barriers are removed, and the water rushes along its channel through the mountain. This I am proud to say, my noble master, is my work. The banquet awaits your presence, and

from your seat you may behold the success of your scheme."

The Emperor rose, and supported by the Empress and Narcissus, moved through the sycophantic throng of courtiers, to the sumptuous board spread out under an awning of cloth of gold. The view before them was beautiful in the extreme; the extensive forests of the Marsi stretching on all sides to the margin of the lake, exhibited a delightful succession of bays and creeks, over which its luxuriant children waved their green arms, and bowed their lofty heads, playing with air and sunbeams, or laving their bright foliage in the cool and quiet waters. Beneath their shadow the hardy peasants were seated in groups, and many a sturdy boor looked over the broad shining surface of the lake, watching various spots of earth, as they became gradually visible by the fall of water, which he might possibly obtain for cultivation, regard-

less of the sacrifice which beauty made to interest in the change. Dancing girls were seen in the deep vistas and through the brown leaves of the forest, circling, like airy beings, round and round, to the gay music of some rustic pipe, the mellow horn too sounded through the wood and distant peels of merriment, at intervals falling upon the ear, created pleasure and suprise in the Royal visitors. The veteran soldiers waved their helmets to the distant groupes of dancers, all eager to join in the inspiring motion—while laughing maidens peeping through the branches, beckoned them to approach in sportive ridicule, or immitated the discipline of the soldiers, as they stood drawn up in military array, not daring to move a foot from their post to join them. In other places young men were seen throwing the discus—some wrestled—others leaped—according to their several inclinations. Even Claudius gazed for a moment upon the prospect, with something like a feeling of de-

light; but the feast possessed more solid attractions for the sensual Emperor, and he turned from the scene of beauty to the viands that loaded the table. He had scarcely tasted any thing when the platform gave indications of falling, and consternation banished the feeling of gluttony for a time. The platform was erected under the immediate inspection of Narcissus, and was situated close by where the channel became narrower, and the stream more deep and rapid, which, overflowing its boundaries, surrounded the building, and rushed with awful violence beneath them. The platform shook violently, and Claudius trembled with apprehension. "I am a lost man!" he cried—"treachery has been at work—my life is put in jeopardy by traitors—and thou, my once beloved friend! whose aid I looked for in the hour of need—whom I have exalted, and showered riches on—thou hast conspired against

thy master, and returned treachery and ingratitude for confidence and generosity! Oh! I am a deserted, miserable man, pursued by the curses of the good, and the vile machinations of favourites! The gods avert this evil—but they refuse to hear me! Oh torment! My dream—my dream! I see it now; my doom is fixed—and Claudius' death-hour has arrived at last! Fool that I was, to leave my palace in Rome to come upon this worthless expedition! There I was safe—here every moment hastens unavoidable destruction! Oh Narcissus!—traitor!—parricide!—have I not been more than a father to thee? My wife! my wife! what will become of me? I would give my empire to be that simple soldier, who now stands looking anxious for my preservation!—Ah! no, no! the ruffian smiles in mockery!—How the building shakes! Oh Jupiter! the torrent has swept away the only means of

safety—the steps are carried away! I'm lost! —I'm lost!"

While the Emperor was thus trembling with terror, Agrippina, who perceived a place of safety which could not fall before they had time to escape, took the opportunity of exciting the Emperor's wrath against Narcissus, by accusing him of having directly plotted against his life; for, although he had upbraided him with the intention in the moment of alarm, she knew he was far from believing it to be the case.

"Traitor!" said she, assuming an air of anxiety for Claudius, and abhorrence for his freed man—"This act proves my forebodings to be true. I have long suspected thee; but knowing the power you held over my husband's heart, and too willing to believe myself in error, I concealed my suspicions: but now an idiot would perceive your treacherous intentions!— The pains you took to have the whole con-

struction of this frail building entrusted to your care—the artisans all minions of your own—every thing justifies my former suspicions."

The courtiers who stood around were startled at hearing this absurd accusation, but dare not speak in favour of Narcissus; they stood like images—while he, with a look of scorn at the Empress, uttered the words—"am not *I* here?"

"Yes;" shrieked his infuriated master, "to triumph over the ruin you will cause. I see it now—I am lost! Oh my wife!—all my doubts of thy truth and fondness were false; and he it was that created them all!"

"If I were vile enough," exclaimed Narcissus, "to plan the treachery you both accuse me of, I should not calmly stand here to await the ruin which might overtake us all. Be pleased, my lord, to put your trust in me—the first wish of my heart is for your safety;—it is not too late to ensure it."

Narcissus led the way to a part of the building where a ladder could be placed to assist their escape; which being effected, he retired until Claudius and his crafty enemy, with all who were upon the platform, were beyond the reach of danger, and then descended from his perilous situation. In a few moments after, the whole of the edifice was washed away by the rapidity of the torrent.

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